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Hot Spring

A Journal of Commitment

Kumar Ponnambalam Commemorative Issue

SRI LANKA

WHERE POLITICAL KILLING IS A WAY OF LIFE !

1959

A Buddhist monk pulls out a revolver from his yellow robes and kills the Prime Minister of the country S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike
(the father of President Chandrika)

1988

A Sinhalese extremist guns down popular film star and moderate Sinhala leader Vijaya Kumaratunga
(the husband of President Chandrika)

2000

A pro-government gunman kills unarmed Tamil leader and human rights activist, KUMAR PONNAMBALAM.

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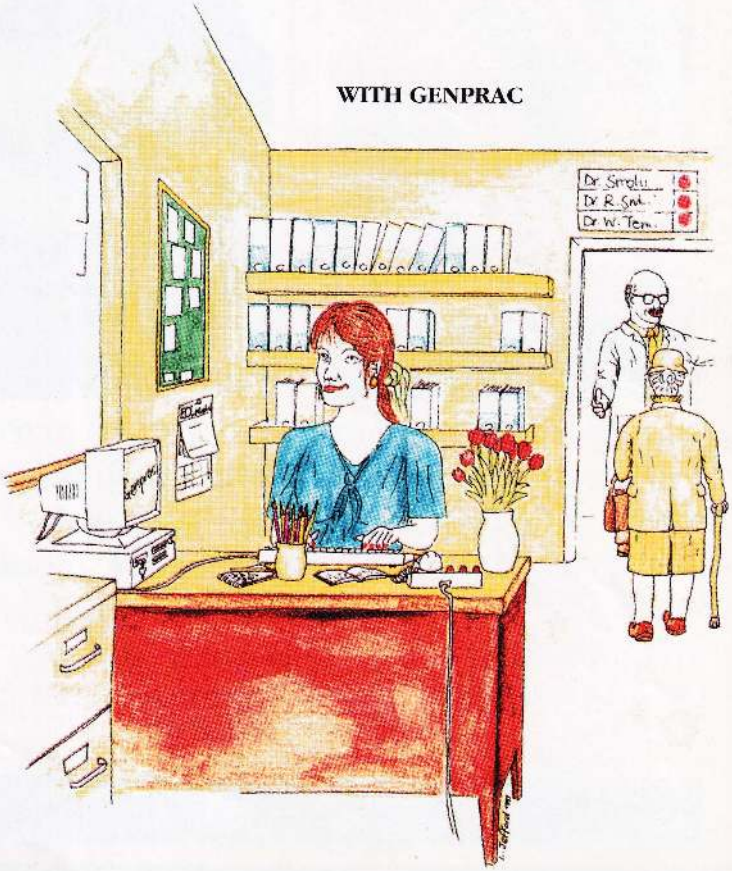

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Editor

S.Sivanayagam

Fax: + 44 (0) 181 696 7761

e-mail: editor@hotspring.org
website: www.hotspring.org

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Hot Spring
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

The courage of NOT Compromising!

In her mother's footsteps-more guile and better finesse!

It is sometimes not realised, particularly by western observers, that the history of the Sinhalese - Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka goes back nearly fifteen years before the island assumed its new name. **The conflict became intensified when President Chandrika's mother - then a powerful Prime Minister, now a lame-duck one, renamed Ceylon in 1972 as Sri Lanka under a new republican constitution that was opposed by the Tamils.** That constitution swept away the only safeguards for minorities enshrined in the existing British-given Soulbury Constitution, which her husband Solomon Dias Bandaranaike had anyway trampled on when he made Sinhala the sole official language of the country in 1956. Mrs.Bandaranaike also tarnished the secular character of the constitution by enthroning Buddhism as the "foremost" religion of the State. Mrs.Bandaranaike's acts of political high-handedness in 1972 were a clear notice to the Tamils that they could never hope of emerging from second-class status as long as she was in power. Her daughter today is only following the mother's footsteps - but with more guile and better finesse.

Unfortunately for the Tamils, their parliamentary leaders, able in their own ways, men of advocacy, were congenital compromisers. They could never meet steel with steel. Their willingness to compromise began even before the country became independent. Speaking in the year 1945 in the State Council of that time, D.S.Senanayake who was to become Ceylon's first Prime Minister urged the minorities to accept the Soulbury Constitution. He said: *"On behalf of the Congress (the Ceylon National Congress) and on my own behalf, I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need they fear at our hands in a free Lanka"!* Appealing specifically to the Tamils, he posed the rhetorical question: *"Do you want to be governed from London, or do you want, as Ceylonese, to help govern Ceylon?" (State Council Debate on the Soulbury Constitution, 8 November 1945).* The Tamil leaders took him at his word, and the first thing that the moustached, waist-coated Prime Minister did on assuming office was to deprive one million Tamils of Indian origin of their citizenship and their right to vote. The then Tamil leader of that time, G.G.Ponnambalam (Sr.) compromised on that issue and accepted a post in the Cabinet.

Mr.S.J.V.Chelvanayakam, a gen-

Contd. overleaf

tle Christian who led his Hindu Tamil flock for more than twenty years thereafter, was firm in his convictions, but believed in the gentlemanly idea of "Give and Take". Sadly for him, the Sinhalese leaders, the Bandaranaikes, the Senanayakes, and Jayawardenes took more and gave little. That was their understanding of Give and Take. But Chelvanayakam's pathetic faith in human nature made him cling to his belief in compromise. Neither Bandaranaike's tearing up of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957, nor the disowning of the Dudley-Chelva Pact of 1965 by the co-author deterred him from seeking some accommodation with the Sinhala Leviathan. It took him twenty long years to accept defeat and come round to the view that the only way out for the Tamil people was to regain their lost status as a free people in their own traditional territory in the northeast of the island. He did not live long enough to pursue that political objective.

CLOCK PUT BACK

The man who took over the reins from him was - from the Tamil point of view,the most expensive compromiser of all. Appapillai Amirthalingam not only went back on his own militant past as an unswerving Tamil nationalist, but also compromised on a more vital issue concerning the entire Tamil nation - the electoral mandate given by his people for an independent state of Tamil Eelam, first articulated in the Vaddukkoddai resolution of 1976, and for which he later campaigned in the General Elections of 1977. **His weakened political will brought him a political reward - the office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Sri Lankan Parliament - but for the Tamil people, in their quest for freedom their mandate was buried and the clock was put back.**

It was in the context of this dismal background and a quarter century of barren protests that the Tamil nation threw up a leader, who made it plain that where it concerned Tamil rights and Tamil dignity, there was no question of any compromise. But it would be pointless to assert so in the face of Sinhala mob terror and Sri Lankan State terror by merely thumping on the desk. One need to have guns. That was how a Prabhakaran was born.

A GOOD WORD

Now, "compromise" in the eyes of some well-meaning people, is a good word. They may be right. The dictionary says it is an intermediate state between conflicting opinions or actions. In other words, a happy halfway method of solving problems and getting on in life. But does that go for all situations? Is there an intermediate state between Justice and Injustice? It is either one or the other. There cannot be a compromise on virginity, can there? You either lose it or keep it. No woman is a half-virgin. **The experience of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka has been , every time their leaders tried to soft-pedal their demands, the weaker became the Tamil case for justice. The recourse to an armed struggle was only a manifestation of the refusal to compromise with an increasingy strident Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony. It was not meant to be an end in itself.**

One of the favourite expressions used by all and sundry to put Prabhakaran in the dock is the word "intrasigence", that is, refusal to compromise. **The accusers fail to realise that it is this intransigence that has brought the Tigers to their commanding position today; where even the world's only super power has found them worthy of being called names.** Prabhakaran was a man who from the time he took to the gun and the cyanide capsule and his political objective was under constant pressure to give up all three , not from one government but from two governments. His hands were twisted when he was kept incommunicado in Suite 518 at Delhi's Ashok Hotel and asked to sign on the dotted line. He was earlier under pressure when he was flown from Madras to Bangalore at the SAARC summit meeting with Jayawardene himself waiting in the city for the outcome Any lesser man would have wilted under that kind of pressure. He has to contend with the hatred spewed by the Colombo media not to mention the sneers of the Brahmin-controlled Indian Press. Today he faces the entire armed might of the Sri Lankan State machinery with several world governments, the U.S., Japan, Britain, India, Israel, China, chipping in with direct or indirect help to his adversary, selling arms, giving military training, offering aid as well as some unspelt political support. **And he stands alone, supported only by his Tiger boys and girls whose fierce commitment to the cause and their reverential loyalty to their leader is a phenomenon rarely seen in the world today.**

"PEACE WITH WAR"

After sixteen years of war by successive Sinhala governments, in which several war ministers and several generals have come and gone, having failed to cow down Tamil resistance, we have at last come to the stage where a serious peace process has been initiated, thanks to the dogged efforts of the Norwegian government. President Chandrika has, it appears, adjusted her "War for Peace" strategy to one of "Peace WITH War". But if she thinks that the 1-year time-frame for talks with the LTTE which she negotiated with visiting Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek , along with her hefty 728 million dollar war budget for the Year 2,000 will give her enough time and resources to try a final knock-out blow at the LTTE, she must be making a wrong calculation.

SECRET AGENDA?

There is no doubt at all that Norway is the only country in the world with a proven record of working for peace. She is also the only country that has to her credit, peace-time funding for development projects in the north. Foreign Minister Vollebaek had rightly called for "courage and sacrifices" from both sides to enable him to carry the peace process forward. **Courage and sacrifices are not new to the Tamil Tigers and the Tamil people. If, given the best efforts of Norway, all what President Chandrika is trying to do is to use that government's good offices as cover for any secret agenda of hers, no one should blame the Tigers if they say - "NO WAY".**

S.Sivanayagam

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

A PRAYERFUL TRIBUTE FROM A CHRISTIAN PRIEST

Whether I be Christian or Kumar be Hindu,
You O Lord, are that One Unique Source and Summit
of Life, Truth and Justice.

We both worship You, yesterday, today and tomorrow
And we all will come to rest in You for ever.
I thank you Lord for the Sixty years of Life
you have given to Kumar.

Though it be only sixty years by length of time,
you have blessed Kumar with a breadth of life that is global.
He has stretched out his love and touched all of us Tamils-
the high and the low, those living within
and without Tamil Eelam,

those living today and will live hereafter in Thamil Eelam.
His life, O Lord, has been one of Courageous Service
in witness to Your love of the Poor and the Suffering,
and in defence of Your Truth and Justice
for the thousands who fell as victims of torture,
rape and murder.

Lord, as a Christian, I too believe what Kumar
believed and practised ,namely,
"MakkazLin Sevai Mahesan Sevai"
(service to people is service to God),

But Lord, courage for Truth and Justice, appears
a rare commodity among us Tamils
Give me and to my fellow Tamils
that courageous dedication to serve your people
thirsting for nothing but Justice and Peace.

That length and breadth of Kumar's life, O Lord,
are they not an expression of Kumar's depth of life in You ?
What a deep conviction he had to serve Truth and Justice?
For Kumar to put his wealth of learning and talents
courageously and brilliantly,
in defence of the victims of injustice,
Lord, surely, you were with Kumar and
Kumar was with you.

His conviction shot through and through every fibre of his being.
His words were pregnant with a himalayan passion
for Truth and Justice.
Lord, it was with that conviction and that passion,
You gave him,
Kumar faced the enemies and challenged the
mighty and the powerful,
It was that passion to win justice for us Tamils,
that touched the hearts of all Tamils in the world.

(Contd:overleaf)

Lord, grant us too that conviction, passion
and courage,
to stand up for what we believe to be right.

Lord, be was a man of faith, expressing always dependence on you!
Morning after morning as the elite and the professional of
Cinnamon Gardens were driven for high office
Kumar stood bent in worship before you O Lord,
The rest of the day, O Lord, be never bent himself,
neither forward nor backwards.

Here was a Tamil with a rare Backbone for his convictions!
I thank you Lord, for the gift of this believer with that backbone,
who reminds us all, perhaps we who are proud and
haughty, that we depend on You,
who reminds us all never to compromise with untruth and injustice..

Lord Jesus was betrayed by Judas-
An ungrateful disciple enticed by thirty pieces of silver!
Hitler had his willing executioners as well as even
religious leaders who connived by their silence.
Lord, enlighten our conscience and grant us courage
never to betray nor to compromise with injustice.
We may be knowingly or unknowingly by our silence
betray the Cause of Truth, Justice and Peace

Lord, give speech to our lips, and strength to our
backbones, to stand up and speak up.

For fear of facing criticism, for fear of being associated
with a just rebellion,
for fear of being counted among the ordinary and the young,
many of us are still behind the walls of silence -
Lord wake us up, give us courage to stand up and to speak out.

Kumar is gone!
Lord, I am tempted to ask You,
is it a curse of yours, that we Tamils have so many
cowards and willing
betrayers of truth and justice?
I believe not, Lord.
You, who gave us a Kumar
You who gave us that fearless leader, that Champion of Truth
and that courageous Defender of the Rights
of People,
Surely, you are not going to leave us orphans.

Lord, forgive those enemies and cowards who have silenced him!
Often we are tempted to think falsely, that these enemies
and cowards are all
on the other side of some divide.
Help us Lord to rid of that cowardice, for which Kumar
fell a victim

Help us to close ranks with one another,
to straighten up, to stand up and to serve You
and your people thirsting for Truth, Justice and Peace!

A tall fire is consuming the body of Kumar,
may its warmth and light spread over the entire Tamil Nation.
Lord give us a heart to love our mother land and our people.
Lord give us the light of wisdom, more than titles
of wealth and learning, to embrace the Tamil Cause.

Lord grant us, even a bit of that heroic courage
you gave to Kumar, to stand up for what we believe,
to speak out for Truth and Justice without counting the cost.

Funerals, they say, are not for the dead, but for the living.
Yes, Lord, Kumar had done his duty, perhaps
more than his duty
In his Moksha Life with You, O Lord,
may Kumar live on in us,
not merely in our memory, not merely in our history,
but in the heart and mind of all Tamils - in the
very soul of Thamil Eelam.

S.J.Emmanuel,
Germany

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

Posthumous honour from the LTTE

Two barristers, two doctors, the Ponnambalam family, wife Yogalakshmi, son Gajendrakumar and daughter Mrilalini.

In conferring the "Mamanithan" award to the late Mr.Ponnambalam, LTTE leader Mr.Velupillai Prabhakaran said in his citation:

"The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam wish to express their deep shock and profound grief over the brutal killing of Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam, a courageous Tamil leader who fearlessly exposed the hypocrisy of the Sinhala state and audaciously championed the cause of the Tamil nation.

"We accuse the Sri Lanka government and the Tamil quisling groups of masterminding and executing this heinous crime to silence a brave, daring voice of reason that defended the rights of the Tamils. Mr.Ponnambalam's sudden death is a great and irreparable loss to the Tamils, a monumental tragedy that has befallen the Tamil nation at a critical historical time.

"Faced with constant threat to his life and property, Mr. Ponnambalam lived in the heart of the Sri Lankan capital and boldly challenged his racist adversaries. His speeches and writings which touched on extremely controversial issues expressed his truthfulness, genuineness, uprightness and indomitable spirit for justice.

"He pleaded for the rights and liberties of thousands of innocent Tamils in Colombo who were subjected to constant persecution at the hands of the tyrannical Sinhala state. He also voiced Tamil rights at international forums.

"Mr.Ponnambalam was the only Tamil leader who openly and fearlessly supported the armed freedom struggle of the Liberation Tigers. He endorsed the policy of the LTTE as the authentic political objective based on the right to self-determination of the Tamil people.

"By his gallant and heroic life in advancing the legitimate cause of the Tamils amidst all dangers, Mr.Ponnambalam has earned the respect and admiration of his people as a true Tamil patriot"

"Mr.Ponnambalam was the only Tamil leader who openly and fearlessly supported the armed freedom struggle of the Liberation Tigers.

– LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

Kumar's Last Journey

The funeral of Mr.Kumar Ponnambalam took place in Colombo on 9 January 2000. His body was cremated at Kanatte Hindu cemetery around 1 p.m. His son Gajenthirakumar set fire to the pyre.

The cortege of Mr.Ponnambalam left the residence, 'Geethanjali' at Queens Street around 10.30 a.m. Over one thousand people followed the cortege to the cemetery.

A large number of people from all communities, including Tamil parliamentarians and opposition party members attended the funeral, sources said.

Shops remained closed in areas where Tamils live in large numbers, including Wellawatte, Bambalapitiya, Kollupitiya. Black and white flags were also hoisted in these areas to mourn the slain leader.

A hartal was observed in the northern towns of Jaffna, Mannar and Vavuniya with shops remaining closed.

In the Batticaloa district, Tamils in Araiyampathi, Pudukuddiruppu, Senkaladi, Siththandi and Valaichchenai villages observed a hartal by hoisting white and black flags and closing down shops in mark of respect.

In Batticaloa town, shops were not closed due to threats made by a local leader of the United National Party with the help of some members of Sri Lankan armed forces, traders said.

People living in the areas held by the Liberation Tigers in the district also mourned, sources said.

People in Mannar observed a hartal at the request made by the District Organizers of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation and Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Organization. Shops were closed and black flags were hoisted.

Tamils in Trincomalee also observed hartal. Black flags were seen all over the town and shops were closed.

In the Jaffna peninsula, black flags were hoisted in public places and shops were closed.

(TAMILNET)

Dr.Mrs.Yogalakshmi Ponnambalam, the widow of slain All Ceylon Tamil Congress leader.

The bride and groom: 1972

Funeral procession on its way to the cemetery. Photo:TamilNet

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

THEY MOURNED FOR HIM IN LONDON

Despite short notice and it being a working day, several hundreds gathered at the Archbishop Lanfranc school hall in Croydon on January 9 to pay homage to the memory of the late Kumar Ponnambalam. At the meeting chaired by Dr.Moorthy of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation, speaker after speaker extolled the courage of the late Tamil leader and mourned his loss to the Tamil community.

Meanwhile about a hundred Tamils staged a candlelight vigil outside the British Prime Minister's residence at Downing Street. on the same evening. A large banner reading "WHY DOES THE WEST TURN A BLIND EYE TO TAMILS GETTING KILLED IN SRI LANKA" was stretched across the gathering.

Mr.Kumar Ponnambalam(right) pictured along with Human Rights activists at the European Parliament, Brussels.

A petition to Prime Minister Tony Blair stressing the need for international action to ensure Ponnambalam's killers are brought to justice was also handed over at Downing Street .

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

Over 4000 Canadian Tamils mourn in freezing weather

Over 4,000 Canadian Tamils gathered in extreme cold weather condition in an open arena and expressed their grief and outrage over the assassination of 'MAMANITHAN' Kumar Ponnambalam. The people started to gather from 6 o'clock in front of Ontario Provincial Parliament (Queen's Park) on January 10, 2000. The attendees included Members of Parliament and Provincial Parliament, Councilors of the City of Toronto, Representatives of Human Rights Organizations and Community Organizations, Ministers from various Religious organizations.

The Memorial meeting started with the hoisting of the Tamil National flag and Canadian flag followed by the lighting of the traditional lamp by the parents of heroes (Maveerer). President of the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils (FACT) who pointed out the contributions and highlights in Kumar Ponnambalam's life delivered an eulogy.

A representative from the World Tamil Movement read the acclamation, conferring the Late Kumar Ponnambalam as the most eminent person "Mamanithan" by the Leader of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

During the speeches of Members of Canadian Parliament and Ontario Provincial Parliament condemned the assassination of Kumar and called upon the government to take full responsibility for his murder. Many of them expressed their disappointment on the number of Human Rights violations, extra judicial killings and disappearances in the island of Sri Lanka.

Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Agincourt Jim Karygiannis promised the Canadian Tamils that he would raise the issue in the House of Commons when they resume their sittings next month. Elected representatives of City of Toronto urged the Sri Lankan government to halt the persecution of the Tamils and allow them to live as a nation.

Some community leaders remarked that the international community should consider declaring Sri Lankan State as a terrorist state. Tamil Woman representative and a relative of Kumar Ponnambalam also spoke expressing their shock and paid tribute to "Marath Thamizhn" Kumar Ponnambalam.

Dominating the stage was a 6 ft - high picture of Kumar, along with another large photograph.

The popular mood on the occasion was that while the pro-govt, assassins could kill Kumar but not the Tamil peoples' aspirations.

The temperature was below zero during the whole memorial meeting.

The local and national TV stations gave wide coverage for the event.

(TAMILCANADIAN NEWS ROOM

Kumar and wife Yogi pictured at a reception in Canada

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

The First Martyr of the Millennium

BY: SATYA RAMANAN

Two centuries ago, Robert Emmet the Irish patriot said, 'My lamp of life is nearly extinguished.' British justice had given him the forum to say his ultimate piece. He immortalised himself with his brilliant speech. The quest for the redemption of the Irish did not end with Emmet.

Kumar Ponnambalam's life was extinguished without warning. The privilege of saying his last was not for him. But is of no matter. He had spoken enough and written enough to earn a niche in every Tamil mind. The demise of Kumar Ponnambalam has not lacerated the will of the Tamil people. The will is not conquered. It is fated to remain unconquerable. An authentic voice has been stilled, but the community will move on. Kumar Ponnambalam had premonitions that his life will be snuffed out. He showed no fear and feared not death. His soul continued to be tortured. His yearnings remained unrealised. Tamils believe that his spirit will see its fulfilment.

Kumar Ponnambalam was born into wealth and circumstance. This was inheritance. Qualifying for the father's mantle was challenging. The father set his imprint in a settled era. Kumar Ponnambalam, living as he did, in times of turbulence, was impelled to reach for the tortuous. Soft politics had only allurements and little besides. These are ensnaring and debilitating. He set his face against them and went into the eye of the storm. His mark is indelible.

Kumar Ponnambalam was of uncommon mettle. Millenia of pride and independence the Tamils cherished were manifest in him. Drawing inspiration from their hallowed heritage, he was proud to call himself a Tamil. He even delighted in flaunting it. An active mind, setting on a leadership trail would symbolise the characteristics of a people whose aspirations he sought to voice. Kumar Ponnambalam displayed these traits.

His courage was indomitable. His toil was unremitting since the situation demanded it. He charted his course unflinchingly. After joining battle there was no halting midway. It was impossible for him to be a mere spectator. He alighted on the stage itself. The cause he championed was the redemption of the Tamils for which he did not go into single combat. He acknowledged the most potent force. Within these frontiers he delineated his turf. All his emotions were directed single mindedly. His powers of intellect were driven to serve his only goal.

The wealth and the learning of Kumar Ponnambalam were readily at the service of his community. His knowledge of the law and the practice of his profession benefted many a Tamil. His energies were purposefully channelled. He had developed a fluent tongue, perfected a facile pen, both of which he wielded with deadly effect. Ultimately these brought death to him. But he would have had little regret. In his writing he was unsparing, in speech forthright. Candidness he developed as his forte. There were hostile murmurs, ruffled tempers, and the rustling of leaves. But there was no turning back. Kumar Ponnambalam was steadfast in his principles.

The challenges he faced demanded diverse responses. Among them was how to face the enemy within. It was insidious. Scorning them as mercenaries he sought to vanquish them. He had the accolade of the community for this brave endeavour. The adversary was formidable. His searchlight of exposure spared nobody. He exploited all fora, national and international. While keeping the fire aflame, he inspired confidence among the Tamils, here and in the diaspora. In articulating the Tamil point of view Kumar Ponnambalam was irrepressible. The adversary's image stood dented and wrecked.

Kumar Ponnambalam's death is felt as a void because his contributions were great. Tamils have considered them as invaluable. A vast multitude thronged to pay their last respects. It was the widest possible spectrum of Tamils and was representative of all shades. Writ upon their face were feelings of deep grief, a sense of loss that was irreparable and a feeling of forlorness. These were expressions of solidarity. Also explicit was a strong commitment to the cause that Kumar Ponnambalam espoused and fought for with verve. A doughty warrior being removed from a tumultuous scene could not pass unwept or unhonoured.

"He who has the power of speech, is indefatigable and is fearless cannot be trounced by anybody." So says a classic. His father was the epitome of the first two, the son of the last. He proved his mettle and his community showered its gratitude. With a sagacious discernment for caution he may yet have been living. But that was not destined to be. But he lives in the hearts and minds of the Tamils.

The highest honour, of the people's endearment, was boldly evident after his demise. In appreciation of his illustrious labours a worthy epitaph remains to be inscribed. It awaits the fruition of his vision. Tamils are proud of Kumar Ponnambalam. Prouder still are his wife and children.

(ISLAND - 23RD JANUARY 2000)

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

"He fought them in their own Citadel"- Wakeley Paul

(Eulogy delivered at the memorial to Mr.Ponnambalam on January 22, 2000, organized by the Ilankai Tamil Sangam, USA)

I am both touched and humbled by the thought of being allowed to say a few words today. I am sorry I could not pay this tribute in person. I would not however miss this opportunity to pay it, in whatever way I could.

Unlike us expatriates, G.G.Kumar Ponnambalam fought the Sinhalese in their own citadel. He knew of the dangers he was heir to, as did we all. Yet, when it happened, a feeling of chilled disbelief ran through our veins. Could Sinhalese governments go to these lengths to stifle the voices that asked for nothing more than a reasoned dialogue? Who amongst them had he hurt, except by expressing thoughts that should have touched their consciences.

Did it hurt and embarrass them so much that they had to dispose of him? Does this spell the end of dialogue between the races? It certainly seems so at this moment, when Tamil minds have been numbed by the sadness and significance of this event. Where do we turn, what can we do. He was our voice in their midst. Even their muffled press published some of his sentiments. But all that is over now.

Kumar began his political career struggling to revive his father's party. This was at a time when most Tamils had forgotten the crucial role his father had played in what ultimately evolved into a demand for a separate state. His demand for 50 /50 representation in a national parliament was the warning, that without it, one race would dominate the others and forget them. It was from this realization that Federalism and the ultimate cry for Independence finally emerged. The younger GG was one of the few who saw and appreciated his father's contribution, when against all odds, he tried to resurrect a party that had fallen out of favor.

The younger G G was not however the unimaginative politician who glued himself to a cause that spurred him into politics. He sensed the winds of change. Over the years, after having initially opposed the L.T.T.E and all it stood for, he realized that they were the only legitimate voice of The Tamil people, particularly those who lived in the Northeast of the Island.

He realized that they were the only political force that lived and struggled with its people in a long, often discouraging, monumentally painful and debilitating battle to be free of SINHALA domination Even though there was nothing in it for him, he voiced these sentiments at great risk. The realization that he actually ended up a victim of that risk, makes all of us swallow with a silenced disbelief. Is this what this island has descended to? Can any honorable human being of the likes of Kumar, survive in it? Is this land that has been internationally praised and economically sustained for its democratic commitment? Is there any reason to doubt, not just the magnitude, but the significance and meaning behind the flood of Tamils leaving this land of theirs?

G.G. Ponnambalam was a hero amongst heroes.While recognizing the seriousness of the problem of refugees overseas, he never chose to be part of that problem. He remained in Colombo, the SINHALA capital.

Appu's day: Young Kumar , then 9, with his father the day he took oaths as Minister of Industries, Industrial Research and Fisheries in the D.S Senanayake government.

That is where he was nurtured That is where he stayed.and that is where he fought them from. There, he was surrounded by danger every living moment from the day of his transition. They feared him and have done away with him. They never will wipe him away from our memory.

Kumar, "Your name will be enshrined in history as the one whose battlefield was their door step,

It hurt so much, they had to get rid of you. Your voice and your words will however reverberate from every Tamil temple and church throughout the globe. It will wing its way back to their dinner tables. May they digest their cowardice and their dishonor, as they should.

Goodbye great soldier. May someone, if someone there will be, try to emulate you now.

❑ ❑ ❑

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

AN UNCOMPROMISING HUMAN RIGHTS WARRIOR

By M. Somasundram

Fifty years ago, inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt, the United Nations approved the sweetest document of humanity: the Charter on Human Rights. Its essence was the right to a life lived in dignity. Little attention was given to its implementation though. But in the last two decades the time for its acceptance had come. A renewed effort was made to give meaning to the charter. The negative was, when desirable and popular movements come into their own, a bunch of self-seekers and charlatans come visiting, to take over for their own benefit. But there are also dedicated activists who make it their life's mission to raise the level of humanity even though, by doing so, they may pay with their lives. Kumar Ponnambalam was one such joining a lengthening list of human rights martyrs. He was a one-man movement who gave support to his cowed and anaesthesised community. He gave voice to the voiceless trying to touch the hearts of the heartless. **His community turned up in their thousands for his funeral, though many had not known him personally, to salute and bid tearful farewell.**

Sir Lanka, shares with many countries in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, a melancholy reputation of being an egregious abuser of human rights making her a grim example of the downside of democracy. The civilised concept of the rule of law, inherited from the British by the government of newly independent Sir Lanka, was abruptly shattered, in 1956, by a new populist government determined to introduce an exclusivist view of the polity. This roused historical enmities which the colonial powers had kept under control for 500 years. The aged and venerated leaders of protest, who responded to the exclusion of their community with a peaceful, non-violent satyagraha, were set upon by a group of raving jingoists, sustained by the studied indifference of the defenders of the rights of association - the police. From indifference to the degeneration, where the state itself engages in terrorism-valuing all human rights at nought - was but a short step. The 1971, 1988-89 rightful protests by the marginalised southern youth were bloodily suppressed. The rightful protests of the marginalised an discriminated northern youth are now undergoing the same treatment. In this atmosphere of terror Kumar Ponnambalam tried to be an anodyne influence to mitigate its worst manifestations.

Kumar Ponnambalam had a lone double task. The first was to fight unrepresentative political parties, from his own community, claiming a spurious status based on legal manoeuvre. The second was to fight an unresponsive majoritarian government determined to wage war on his community. In return for thirty pieces of silver the unrepresentative political parties had joined hands with the government in this war. This is not strange. Petain of France and his group had joined hands with Hitler. They enjoyed their thirty pieces of silver wearing the crown of thorns as a fashion fad.

It was Kumar Ponnambalam who filled the vacuum in his community. Blatant human rights abuses, the Krishanthi Kumaraswamy rape and murder, the 700 certified 'disappearances' in Jaffna, the Kokadichcholai massacre, the Chemmani graves were conveniently brushed under the carpet by the non-representative political parties. It was Kumar Ponnambalam, by sheer dint of persistent probing and publicity, who was able to present these violations to the world and thereby compelled the international community to get engaged in Sri Lanka. **He exposed the scandal of the Kalutara remand gaol, where thousands of political detainees from this community were kept, for years, without charges being framed. When they showed their gratitude for his intervention by raising mourning flags to commemorate his funeral the authorities shot three of them dead and injured scores.** He was instrumental in drawing attention to the nutritional and medicinal deprivation in the foetid refugee camps to which the Wanni people had been herded. He provided balancing evidence, to the regular meetings of the UN Commission on Refugee Rights held in Geneva. This hard evidence countered the propaganda whitewash of the government. He was ceaselessly active in press, radio and TV discussions presenting the true facts of human rights abuses. No government was happy with him. He was not merely a thorn but a security threat to their legitimacy. Despite increasing death threats he continued to plough his lonely and hazardous furrow?

Why do such men work at the brink, at such risk to themselves, indifferent to Darwinian survival instincts? He was born in the lap of luxury to the highest bracket in the richest segment in Sri Lanka. He could enjoy life. But a deep fundamental humanity sustained him. Human beings were indi-

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viduals who had to be treated with dignity irrespective of class, ethnicity or education levels. The cavalier treatment of human rights in Sri Lanka was deeply offensive to his personality. To deal with these breaches if not he, who? If not now, when? He held it dear that the highest form of devotion is being of service to the people. As for those who oppress the people, whatever their earthly enjoyment for the nonce, their time will come, as it would for all sentient beings. When it does, they could only peep about in search of dishonourable graves, widely reviled by their constituents, whom they had so grossly exploited.

While it is understandable, though not excusable, as to why political groups had become lapdogs and collaborators in government oppression of their own people, the indifference of the NGO sector to the most recent human rights violations is less explainable. The editors of 'Satana' and 'Thinamurasu' newspapers were gunned down. Kumar Ponnambalam was the third. There was a period in the past when such events were the norm, Richard Zoysa being the symbol, but it was felt that this period was mercifully over. It now appears that it was only dormant to re-appear in a more virulent and vicious form. Human rights NGO's who made it a point to condemn these earlier happenings, were eloquently silent about the recent three. Silence itself is collusion. Where is the NGO conscience? The bitter truth has to be faced. It had gone the way of all flesh. It is now savouring donor kebab. However, to deal with residual anorexic concerns for human rights, it has restricted itself to holding safe seminars on the subject, in 5 star hotels, where it intellectualises on normative human rights issues when the need is for activism. In these seminars, if reality intrudes, then it is held that reality should be changed.

Kumar Ponnambalam was not an intellectual of this arid type. He was an activist interested in getting results. He thoughts like a doer and did like a thinker. This pragmatic approach was much appreciated the evidence being that the University of Jaffna closed for two days in his memory.

Perpetuating his life work

In the present bleak period he stands out, like Liyanaarachchi, who too paid with his life in the 1988-89 southern events. But it is a mistake to think that the current human rights onslaught can be partitioned and hermetically sealed, abuses being restricted to one community. They would eventually spread engulfing all of Sri Lanka. Disturbing indications are already emerging of a new 'dirty war' having started. It is best that urgent attention be given, by all uncompromised Sri Lankans, to devising prophylactic measures, which if they cannot prevent human rights abuses, could adopt activist stances when they do occur. These could be immediate investigation and publicity and the

Kumar Ponnambalam

exploration, to the optimum, of available judicial remedies. **Serious thought should also be given to establishing a Kumar Ponnambalam Institute of Human Rights (KUPIHUR) that would adopt such activist stances.** This institute would extend his life work. Once established KUPIHUR's immediate objective should be to offer legal assistance to the many political detainees languishing in remand in Kalutara only for the lack of financial means. It is imperative that KUPIHUR should be an inclusive institution which serves all communities of Sri Lanka when there are human rights abuses and not be exclusively restricted to serving one community.

Kumar Ponnambalam has completed his mortal span and is now beyond touch. Yet, his activist life in support of a noble cause - of giving dignity to a human being - should be the occasion for each individual to reflect, who one was, now is and should be. This self-examination would be particularly relevant to human rights NGO's. **Are they solely in the business of careerist self-advancement or do they have a social function?**

In the troublesome days in which we are now living and possibly worse days to come, where midnight darkness could break at dawn, it would be an abdication of what it is to be human to succumb to existentialist despair or seek inert solace in the next world. We make our own lives and we make our own world. Kumar Ponnambalam's voice is stilled but the example he set, of standing in defense of the helpless and the suppressed gives ballast to the essential nobility of the human personality. He demonstrated that we should make our own world of dignity irrespective of whatever abuse is heaped on us.

Within the first few days of the recent triple calendar changes came the headwaters of, what may presage to be, a torrent of blood. If the lessons of the life of Kumar Ponnambalam were to be truly learnt, it is, that, we are the ones to stanch human rights abuses, as best as we could end in these endeavours we are truly alone.

He leaves behind his wife, son and daughter. ❑

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Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

Rebel with a cause

(Excerpts from an article by A.KANDAPPAH, in the Weekend Express, Colombo, of January 15-16, 2000).

The late Senator Adlai Stevenson, who strode the American political scene in the late 60s and 70s, was called "the President who never was". Stevenson had all the attributes that could have made him an excellent and popular US President but he never made it. Kumar Ponnambalam, who did not succeed in being elected to Parliament, had a much higher profile than many Tamil parliamentarians or Ministers.

"He was constantly in the public eye - relentlessly fighting for many a Tamil cause. Any perceived injustice to the Tamil people would pain him and spring him unto action until the process of justice is properly focused to right that particular wrong. Bringing the perpetrators of the inhuman murder of the innocent teenager Krishanthi Kumarasamy and others was largely an effort of Kumar, who struggled hard against great odds of State power and prejudice to bring this to the public eye.....

"...I recall an occasion when the SLFP Lawyers' Association hosted a meeting (1993) at the SLFP headequarters in a public discussion of the ethnic problem. Among the speakers were current President Chandrika, the late Gamini Dissanayake, and a host of others. The meeting was violently disturbed and I felt there may be a threat to harm Kumar. Together with the organisers we sought to protect him. The late Gamini Dissanayake - accompanied by his security retinue - offered to take Kumar out of the building through a by-entrance.

"In the face of bodily harm, Kumar politely demurred and preferred to face the day. I was surprised many of those who caused the disturbance - some of them in Parliament today apologised to Kumar and assured him he was not the target of their ire.....

A devout Hindu

"There were two public perceptions of Kumar. One - the creation of a section of the Press that projected him as an anathema to the Sinhalese and all that is dear to them. Much has been said of his rushing overseas to "internationalise" the intractable Tamil question. Yet today, one sees leaders of political parties and former Prime Ministers calling on envoys of other countries making various complaints of serious short-comings from "rigged elections" to "personal danger of political candidates",

"Kumar may have provided succour to this unreal image by his unconventional style of approach to matters political. Whereas the normal Tamil politician would choose a low profile "don't rock the boat" approach to sensitive matters, Kumar would go ahead on to the centre of controversy, not because he was looking for trouble or being indiscreet, but his nature and mental chemistry was such that he would unmitigatingly insist on "calling a spade a spade". He had little patience with the round about "hypocritical" and tip-toe approach.

"This characterestic in his ebullient nature flowed into his writing as well. To accuse him with total lack of diplomacy would be to make an inaccurate judgement of a man whose true nature was diametrically the opposite of what is usually projected. It would be just as inaccurate to say that his approach to all matters political met with the approval of most Tamils. No. There were many Tamils who did not agree with him in many issues and have told him his approach could be counter-productive. Yet they were all with him on the occasions he resolutely raised his voice on their behalf - while those expected to do this chose to wait for another day and another strategy.

To those who have known him for long - in the bar, in politics, in diplomatic and social circles - they saw a different man. Here is an amiable gentleman possessed of courtly manners of the noble characterestics he has been moulded into by generations of excellent upbringing. He leaves those of recent acquaintance impressed with his grace and charm. He would polite-

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ly refer to them as "Sir" and "Madam". Any Tamil over 40 would be called only as "Annan" and "Akka".

He was a devout Hindu who faithfully followed the customs and rituals of his religion and culture and exceptionally proud of the primordial Hindu ethos. In recent years he undertook regular visits to the great temples of South India. He diligently studied Hindu literature and the wisdom of ancient sages, an exercise now increasingly followed by leading intellectuals in established institutions of higher learning in the West in an effort to discover the deeper meanings in the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads as instruments to overcome difficult questions of contemporary times. A man given to such intellectual religious and cultural depths is hardly a candidate to even being accused of hurting those of other races.

"He was well endowed financially and not in want. Fame and fortune flowed to him with consummate ease. He could have ignored the contradictions around him and chosen to enjoy the fruits of his wealth with his family.

"But some people are cast differently and chose to place their welfare behind those of others less fortunate. He was restless because he saw injustice and discrimination in its most naked form and he fought against it knowing very well his life was on the block but that did not matter to him.

"He realised every minute of the day and night his life was in danger for the cause he championed and so those close to him cautioned him - but that did not matter because there was much more in his ceaseless crusade to fight wrong. He was clearly misunderstood and, therefore hated by many. Was the cruel, calculated assassination of such a talented man - who had much to give to his country and all of its people - the work of an overzealous and misguided killer or part of a conspiracy? Will we ever know? **All we know is once again a deeply sick society has cruelly silenced the life of yet another good man , slurring a once decent people in the eyes of the world.**

* * *

PONNAMBALAM WILL LIVE ON

(an unsigned tribute in THE SUNDAY LEADER, Colombo, of January 9, 2000, and one of the few genuinely meant tributes that appeared in the Colombo Press)

For Kumar Ponnambalam to be shot dead by a mysterious gunman was news that was least expected at this time, especially because it came much after he was in the limelight fighting for his cause.

Ponnambalam , slouched so sadly in death is a picture that will always stay in our minds. But the Kumar Ponnambalam that we knew will be the Kumar Ponnambalam who walks into our offices and has a friendly chat with everybody - even the peons.

It is a sad end to a man so harmless, so kind, and so humane.

Who was this "bitter enemy" that he had who wanted him dead ? It is hard for us to imagine.

Kumar Ponnambalam was the reporters' saviour. For anybody starved of stories, one telephone call to Kumar and his nightmare was over. Kumar's perspectives on matters, especially on minority matters, were very radical and bordered sometimes on treason. But the copy was always made entertaining because of a quote from this flamboyant personality.

Kumar also remembered faces. A cub reporter to whom he had given a story could be sure of a half-smile of recognition when he met Kumar the next time. And as the relationship grew, Kumar would also phone in with stories - mostly plugs - which could be used if the reporter used that material intelligently.

In the late 1980s Kumar was a different person from what he was towards the end.In the last few years, there was a trace of bitterness, born no doubt from the political line he was taking, that refused to find acceptance from both sides. In the late 1980s he was able to take the failures in his endeavours at political asdvancement with more equanimity and hope that the brand of politics he espoused would triumph in the end.

Kumar was known for his almost fabulous wealth. But though possessed a fleet of Mercedes cars, his attire - except for the gold bracelet he wore - bordered on the slovenly. He never sought to advertise himself be wearing designer clothes or have retinue of henchmen.

Kumar's objective was to be a symbol of Tamilness. He wore a verti and holy ash on his forehead, had a shrine constructed on the parapet of his home on Queen's Road and had the Aum symbol on his letterhead. In a way it was his relentless activity to advertise his Tamilness that cost him his life.

He believed that he did not have enemies who would kill him. He was after all "good" with the Tigers, though they might not have taken kindly his professions of being their representative. And among the politicians of the south, he knew them intimately enough, to be aware that they were not going to kill him for his views.They might berate him in public for his opinions, but killing him, certainly not.

In another age, where power comes with wealth and status, he might have found a niche in the power elite that was suitable for his genius. But in today's rough and tumble world of parliamentary politics, he had little place.

Whatever his views were, a politician like Kumar Ponnambalam would have adorned parliament. He would have been the politician who would have espoused what was unpopular, brough to the fore lost causes and been the maverick MP that made a legislature a vibrant institution, where the individual MP counted, rather than the creature of the party which is to what parliamentarians of today have been reduced. ❑

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

KUMAR AND THE TAMIL PSYCHE

By: Karthigesu Sivathamby

As the new century opened, Sri Lanka experienced a great political shock.

Kumar Ponnambalam, Colombo's political loner, was assassinated on January 5, 2000.Sinhalese were disturbed, Muslims grieved and Tamils, to the last person,mourned.

The shock was too great for the Tamils. The sorrow began to express itself in the large numbers that attended the funeral and in the voluntary closing of shops in the major towns of the north and east, including Jaffna.

Every Sri Lankan Tamil, whether of Sri Lankan origin or of Indian origin,felt it as a personal loss. There was great grief.

Kumar was known for his outspokenness. He openly criticised all state-actions and activities that led to the suffering of the Tamils and to their humiliation.

This criticism was largely done through letters to the press, radio/TV discussions (some of them in Sinhala) and speeches. He often wrote to or contacted the state agencies concerned and released that correspondence to the press.

These representations brought to light the suffering of the average Tamil who had neither the power nor the strength to tell it him/herself.

Kumar did this within a political and administrative environment that was full of distrust. It earned him the political wrath of his opponents.

This was no empty exercise in political rhetoric. As a lawyer, he took up the cases of many victims of detention and obtained legal and judicial redress.

He did this without any monetary benefit. At international forums where the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis was discussed, he was quite often the only person from Sri Lanka to present a critical picture.

These were not 'flash in the pan' efforts. He did them consistently and-conscientiously over a decade. The genuineness of his conviction endeared him to the average Tamil.

The place that Kumar has in the Sri Lankan Tamil psyche could be understood only in terms of the political environment within which he operated.

The parliament had ceased to be an effective forum for the representation of grievances of this type. This was due equally to the steady devaluation of parliament as an institution for political redress under the executive presidency as much as to the depletion of the Tamil ranks within the parliament.

This is in sharp contrast to the pre-1982 period when there was effective parliamentary representation amidst the political struggles that were going on.

To add to this there was the general helplessness on the part of the Tamils against the enacted laws and their interpretation, cases were very often heard in places where the average Tamil or his/her relatives were not at ease.

All these were taking place within a political climate in which there was a deduction of the complex national question as one of 'terrorism' vs. liberating the areas'.

Political objectivity was lost amidst problems of control and of administration. No one with a knowledge of Tamil alone could circumvent these legal difficulties and administrative humiliations. Tamil NGOs could not function properly; even international organisations were suspected.

It was in this background that Kumar spoke, and spoke aloud. Kumar, to the average Tamil reader, was voicing the unvoiced, and highlighting the neglected.

The indication of Kumar's sincerity and genuineness had to come through an initial political disbelief. Social propriety demands that such things are not discussed in obituary notices.

Nonetheless, it needs to be mentioned for acknowledging the simple fact, that this posthumous honour he received was a hard earned one.

Kumar came from a political background which was not above suspicion. His father, the late G.G. Ponnambalam, had been severely criticised by his adversaries as being a collaborationist' with the government. The up-country Tamils criticised the stand taken by the All Ceylon Tamil Congress on the citizenship. In the seventies, the Tamil Congress itself was divided.

But Kumar's advocacy for justice and fair treatment of the Tamil victims was so consistent and genuine that it withstood the test of time. From a position of political suspicion he rose to the great heights of political and diplomatic adulation.

It is a pity that he did not live to see how much the average Sri Lankan Tamil admired him, loved him and needed him.

For the average Tamil living apologetically (apologetic for being a Tamil) amidst many humiliations, distrust and suspicions, Kumar was the one who boldly said what he (the average Tamil man) could not say, but felt intensely.

This is why Kumar looms so large in the Sri Lankan Tamil psyche. He was praised for his courage even by his political adversaries.

At the national level Kumar was one of the few - very few - whose openness and straight-forwardness, were the litmus test we have had for political democracy - viz the right to speak publicly what one sincerely feels, irrespective of what others or the powers that be, think of it.

It is high time statesmanship takes over from unenlightened, self-seeking politics.

(COURTESY: SUNDAY LEADER - FEB 6TH, 2000)

GENEVA REMEMBERS KUMAR

Kumar Ponnambalam - "Martin Luther King of our day, As an uncompromising leader he fought for the liberation of his Tamil people " so declared Mr. Charles Graves, Secretary General of Interfaith International while presideing at the Commemmorative Meeting in honour of the late Mr. Kumar G.G.Ponnambalam, held at the Headquarters of the World Council of Churches in Geneva on Wednesday the 9th. of February 2000.

At the beginning of the meeting, all those present stood up for a minute of silence in honour of the late Mr.Kumar Ponnambalam. The president then invited Prof.Dr. S.J.Emmanuel, the former Vicar General of the Diocese of Jaffna and a close friend of the late Mr.Ponnambalam, to light up a lamp in front of an enlarged picture of Mr.Kumar Ponnambalam. The meeting was sponsored jointly by The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples (LIDLIP),International Federation of Tamils (IFT), International Peace Bureau (IPB), Centre-Europe Tiere Monde (CETIM), International Educational Development (IED) and Interfaith International (II)) -all International Organisations for Human Rights, based in Geneva.and who have known Mr.Ponnambalam as a stauch defender of human rights of his people at the international level.

Dr.S.J.Emmanuel, speaking as a friend and witness of Kumar's service to democracy and human rights, said that while the death of Kumar was an irreparable loss to the Tamils at this critical juncture of their history, his assassination raises many questions to the democratic and human right institutions of Sri Lanka and of the world. A clean democrat and a courageous defender of the human rights of his people and of thousands of victims of torture, rape and murder has been silenced.

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LETTERS

A White Man's memories of Jaffna

"Vella Puli" (White Tiger) writes:

Two items in the December issue of '*Hot Spring*' stirred memories which I would like to share with other readers.

The first was the photograph of the martyr's cemetery.

When I first went to Jaffna, I lived in Rajaveethi, Valikamam, just up the road from the Murugan ternple at Nallur and mid-way between Thirunelvely and Kalvian Kadhu junctions. My house was the former home of K.Kailasapathy.

Of course at that time, in 1994, Jaffna was in darkness but in the week leading up to Martyr's Day and V.P's birthday, fluorescent strip lighting was put along the roadside from Jaffna town centre to the cemetery. It was the only time in the year that we had street lighting. The lights were of various colours and I could not imagine the size of the generator that was used to 'lighten our darkness'.

The streets were thronged with people making their way to the cemetery to pay their respects, especially the families who had lost their sons and daughters in the struggle, and those on their return journey home.

I used to go to the gates of my compound, which fronted onto Rajaveethi, and talk with the passers-by. At that time, there were only six 'vellakarans' (white men) living on the Jaffna peninsula so we were a source of great interest and amusement ! I made friends there who are still in regular contact and look back with both-joy and sadness of my two years in 'Yarlpanam'.

The second item was the rather humorous account, by Nicholas Coleridge, of his experiences in 1985, whilst a guest at the 'Welikade Hilton' !

His observations that Jesus, Buddha and Miss Sri Lanka shared equal space on his cell wall, says it all but it was not this that jolted my memory.

His account of his belongings being searched but not his clothing and the 'rugby scrum' and illogical approach to questioning by the 'authorities' was something that sent me off on another trip down memory lane.

"Looking back with both joy and sadness of my two years in Yarlpanam"

When I used to travel between Colombo and Jaffna, I had to use either a commercial ship or, later, the ICRC ship, embarking at Trincomalee. I can remember on one occasion that my entire luggage was painstakingly searched: videos were checked in case they contained subversive material; books were examined page by page, cover to cover, presumably to check that I had no blueprints for weapons systems, aircraft contruction or LTTE propaganda.

Quite by accident, I was wearing a Sony Walkman, and carrying film rolls in my pockets, both being banned items. Of course, neither of these were discovered ! On one trip, the Jaffna GA-had bought a pot of fresh yoghurt from a roadside vendor and even that got a good prodding. On arrival on the Jaffna coast, the ships had to anchor off KKS and wait for SLN officers and divers to conduct another search before we were allowed to proceed back to Point Pedro, where we disembarked.

Now, it was common knowledge that the CID used to visit all the photography shops in Colombo and examine photographs that might have incriminating faces or locations. I used to send my films back to the UK for processing, having two sets of prints taken from each film. My friend in the UK used to file one set and send me the other.

On 31st December 1995, just one month after the 'invasion' of Jaffna, I took three weeks leave in Thailand. I was carrying a selection of photographs which I wanted to show my friends, to make them aware of what was happening in Sri Lanka.

At the baggage check-in counter at Katanaiake [sorry, Bandaranaiake] International, the photographs were found and I was asked where they had been taken. "Jaffna", I replied, "I live and work there".

The baggage checker motioned to a couple of airport security officers who came to investigate. After a couple of minutes, they called two CID officers across who in turn, called two NIB officers.

I was asked if I would go with them to their office, where all six of them 'fought' over the photographs. The ones which they were most interested in were those showing the aftermath of a Kfir bombing raid on Arialai and photographs of the deserted Subash and & Gnanams hotels (which were then, unbeknown to me, being used as SLA headquarters].

The Arialai photos showed coconut trees sliced in half, flattened dwellings, a dead goat and the severed forearm of a young woman. As my flight to Bangkok had been called, I was anxious not to miss the flight and the Thai International airport manager needed a great deal of assurance that he would not be carrying an international terrorist.

(Please turn overleaf)

The combined intelligence group questioned me about who I was, who I worked for, why I lived in Jaffna, and why I was taking these photos to Thailand. Then, in the midst of the interrogation, one of the officials looked at his watch, wished me 'Happy New Year' as the day moved on to the 1st of January and then continued with the questioning. "Do you intend to show these to the Thai press?", he asked. "No", said I, "my memory and tongue could do much more damage than these photographs and if I talked to the Thai press, you wouldn't let me back into Sri Lanka". "Take the negatives and whatever prints you want". In their over-enthusiastic snatch and grab, they managed to keep the photo of the dead goat but let me keep the one of the severed forearm. It didn't matter to me as I knew I had another set of prints in the UK !

They eventually said I could go but I then had to point out that I had not cleared immigration and that they had taken my ticket. Having taken my passport back for the Exit stamp and eventually locating my ticket, I moved swiftly to the departure lounge, calmed my nerves with a few shots of 'Mendis Special' and headed for 'The Land of Smiles'.

Ah, what emotions we experience when "LOOKING BACK".

❑❑❑

"My heart is in Tamil Eelam"

Mr.C.Tharmalingam of 43, Thrift Drive,Singapore 535047, writes:

"....I was born and bred in Singapore. My parents had come from Jaffna. But I have yet to set foot in Ceylon.. Some years ago the joke was : "The chances are that you would come back horizontal". Today it has become a reality. Even though there are some relations living there, my family has lost contact. Worse, I do not know them personally. Therefore, your magazine keeps me well informed, and my heart too is in Tamil Eelam " ❑

"A HIMALAYAN TRAGEDY"

Kurukshetra of NRI Forum (UK), Post Box 42, Wellingborough, writes:

Dear Editor,

It is a tragedy of Himalayan dimensioin that "Big Brother" India, next door is in such rotten political hands as to have little to zero influence in neighbouring sister country Sri Lanka. It is a shame that India's cowardly and clueless policy makers do not feel the heat from fires raging in Sri Lanka. Tamils are after all her own children, a section of whom left for foreign shores a century or so ago to serve the economy of imperial masters of the day.

India has similarly betrayed the NRIs by denying them dual nationality and the gypsies who are abused and beaten up because they are INDIAN. What hope from the incompetent leadership of India who cannot control the fires even in south Kashmir from where the Hindus have been thrown out !

Betrayed NRIs and even the Indians at home have full sympathy with the Tamils' aspirations in northern Sri Lanka. May the New Year bring freedom to your people and some joy to the Kashmiris and the Sikhs. yours truly

Kurukshetra.

" Keep out of parliament"

Mr.S.Sri Ram of 31, Walton St.Isaacs, ACT 2607, Australia writes:

It was a death trap for the Tamils that Jayawardene could find enough opportunistic Tamils to sit in the Sri Lankan parliament. It was what enabled him to proclaim to the international community, the World Bank and IMF that Tamils were duly represented in the country's legislature, and that the LTTE was a mere terrorist organisation. That satisfied his twin purpose of carrying on his genocidal actions against the Tamils while satisfying world opinion. Under Chandrika, the situation remains the same

If only the present Tamil MPs could unitedly quit and the Tamils are not represented in parliament, then the LTTE - whatever names they call them - become automatically the sole representatives of the Tamils. That would be the only way to restore the self-respect and honour of the 3,000 year old TamilNATION.

With only a few months before the parliamentary elections, will all Tamil groups keep away from the hustings and safeguard the unity and solidarity of the Tamil people ?

A re-born Eelam Tamil from Malaysia

Mr.Ganesh Sivaji of 54, Jalan Limau Purat, 59000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, writes:-

I am currently subscribing to Hot Spring in English. I would like to know whether you publish a Tamil version.

If yes, I would like to convert my English version for the Tamil version in order to improve my Tamil and not lose my mother tongue. It is a shame to me, a 3rd generation Tamil residing in Malaysia that the effective language used to communicate in my home and around my family is English.

I am a Malaysian born Ceylon Tamil reborn Eelam Tamil.

Arjuna's Column

Hard-core terrorism and soft-core journalism

One of the sad things about the standard of journalism among some Colombo newspapers is the unquestioning way they accept whatever is supplied to them by government sources, and pass them off to their readers as INFORMATION. This is particularly so, when it concerns Tamils. Okay, the government has reason to be angry with the LTTE , but what business is it of newspapers claiming to be be independent, to go along with government propaganda? Just one example that comes to mind.

The WEEKEND EXPRESS said in a headline recently (Jan.29-30) "Hundred LTTEers arrested in sweep". The report elaborated further and said they were "hard-core Tiger rebels". How did the paper know they were LTTEers in the first place and they were "hard-core" as well? Because some unnamed policeman had said so. How did the unnamed policeman know ? Because he "suspected" them to be so. Hey presto ! Suspicion in the mind of one man becomes FACT in the eyes of the newspaper. The paper went further. It said "7,500 suspected rebels" were taken into custody. Why cannot the paper state the plain fact that 7,500 TAMILS were taken into custody ? A paper which incidentally depends more on Tamil readership for its survival? Imagine 7,500 Tigers roaming the streets of Colombo!

Anoja vs Krishanthi !

Which constitutes greater violence against a woman - the rape and murder of Jaffna schoolgirl Krishanthi, or, the rape of Koneswary and the blowing up of her feminine area with a grenade, or, the recent rape and murder of Sarathambal, (a mother like the President); OR, the burning down of the home of actress Anoja Weerasinge?

Radhika Coomaraswamy

Ask that question from the Tamil women custodians of women's human rights who lead a charmed life in Colombo, the likes of Radhika Coomaraswamys, the Selvi Thiruchandrans, the Kumudini Samuels, and the unspoken answer will be - the burning down of the home of actress Anoja Weerasinghe.

Why? Because - there are three reasons. 1. Anoja is an actress, Krishanthi and the other two were not; 2. The burning down of Anoja's house happened in Colombo, the others were in areas which the Radhikas have not heard of ; 3. The third and important reason - Anoja is Sinhalese, the others were mere Tamils, and their lives are cheaper than Anoja's luxury home.

These unsavoury thoughts are provoked by a recent news item in the SUNDAY TIMES, Colombo which said that several women's organisations, including those headed by Tamil women eggheads, not to mention the redoubtable UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Coomarasamy, have issued a strong statement against the burning down of Anoja's house as "a blatant violation of women's human rights". Funny. **Where do all these Tamil champions of women's human rights hide their heads in Colombo when their own Tamil sisters get raped and killed in Jaffna and Batticaloa and Punguduthivu ?**

Apparently in their manicured, sophisticated, heavily funded minds Rape and Murder come lower down in male culpability than Arson! What makes these soft female minds and hearts tick? It is worth a study by some sociologist.

* * *

Amnesty sees things with one eye

At a workshop on Sri Lanka organised by the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London recently, someone collared an Amnesty International representative and asked her the pertinent question: How come you issue statements condemning the killing of political personalities in Sri Lanka, but failed to condemn the assassination of Kumar Ponnambalam? Stuck for an answer, she said Amnesty International did not know who the assassins were. So now we know. What is important for this Amnesty representative is not the ACT OF KILLING, but the identity of the killer!

It will be remembered that while many responsible organisations condemned the killing of Neelan Tiruchelvam - the act of killing in fact - Amnesty went further and blamed the LTTE for "breach of international humanitarian standards" How did Amnesty know that the LTTE killed him? A body like Amnesty is not expected to issue statements based on suspicions and surmises .

Maintaining double standards is of course the privilege of governments everywhere, but Amnesty International surely...? O tempora, O mores !

20th Century Tamil achievers

We featured in the HOT SPRING issue of December 1999, the names of some 62 Tamil achievers of the past century (from the Editor's own personal knowledge and memory) who are no longer with us, and who deserve to be remembered. We welcome the reader interest shown about that feature. While two readers have sent us more names that deserve to be included, one reader (quite rightly) points out the need for a biographical note about each of them. He says that unless we make detailed references to their achievements, younger readers may not be able to derive any benefit from it. He also adds that not all readers would have heard of all the persons mentioned in the list,and may wonder why they were included at all.

We appreciate the reader's point of view. It was simply the exigencies of time and space that prevented us from including some relevant biographical data. While we would be pleased to respond to any reader's query about any of the persons mentioned, we hope to make detailed references to many of them in future issues.

Mr.Sachi Sri Kantha from Fukuroi City, Japan writes:

"I very much appreciate your compilation of prominent Eelam Tamils of the 20th century, but I was intrigued by some notable omissions. For example -

1. A.Amirthalingam (1929-1989). Whatever his faults were in the post-1977 period, his contributions to the Tamil community from 1949 to 1977 deserve recognition. Otherwise the list will be like the Stalin-era omissions and deletions.

2."Sirithiran"editorSivagnanasundaram, the foremost cartoonist of Eelam.

Kovai Mahesan

3. "Suthanthiran" editor Kovai Mahesan

4.Thavil Vidwan Inuvil Thatchanamoorthy.

6.Folklorist and traditional Tamil scholar Thenpuloliyur M.Kanapathipillai.

* * *

Dr.K.N.Ratnavel (Vidwan Velan) writing in Tamil from Ilford, Essex, U.K. appreciates *HOT SPRING*'s initiative in recalling to memory some of the Tamil achievers of the past century. While he wishes to add the following names to the list, he says a small handbook containing biographical details of past achievers would be a welcome idea.

1. Swami Gnanapragasar
2. V.Veerasingam (Vaddu M.P.)
3. Vidwan Kanesa Iyer
4.Chunnakam Kumarasamy Pulavar
5. C.W.Thamotherampillai
(both already mentioned)
6. Thirumalai Kanagasabaypillai
7. Somasundara Pulavar
8. M.Thiruvilangam
9. S.Natesapillai
10. Uduvil M.Rathineswara Iyer
11. "Pulavarmani" Periathampipillai
12. Navaneetha Krishna Bharathiyar
13. Izhamurugan
14. Vidwan Venthan
15. A.Amuthalingam
16. M.Ponnambalam
17. K.Daniel
18. Sivagnanasuntharam (Short story writer)
19. Sampanthar (Short story writer)
20. Athmajothy Ramachandran
21. Athmajothy Muththaiya
22. Mangalam
23. Kanaga Senthilnathan
24. Kailasapathy (Thirunelveli Teachers' Training College)
25. "Kalaiarasar" Sornalingam
26. Actor Vyramuthu
27. Thavil Vidwan Thatchanamoorthy

IS SUICIDE BOMBING A THREAT TO WORLD ORDER ?

By Margaret Trawick

In a recent edited volume on the war in Sri Lanka, of which there are so many these days (edited volumes, that is) an article by myself was included adjacent to an article by Rohan Gunaratna. RG's came before mine. I guess the editor decided that RG and I represented two extremes of a continuum, and he must have thought it would be amusing to juxtapose our two points of view. I don't remember what RG said in that article, but I vaguely recall that it was the usual sort of stuff about how the LTTE poses a threat to world security and so forth and so on.

In Tamil Circle of 6 February 2000, Raveen Nathan has put us on to another of Rohan's delights. This is in the magazine *Frontline,* to which Prabhakaran also subscribes. *(I know this because I first read the mag in the waiting room of an LTTE political office. After I'd finished it, they sent it on to VP. Better than any dentist's office, hm? But I ramble).*

The article is entitled, "The LTTE and Suicide Terrorism."

Rohan, if you are reading this, let me say that I am really dying (don't take this literally) to meet you, because all your work is so entertaining, in a grisly kind of way. My favorite is that book you published a few years ago (for sale at all Colombo bookstores) about the LTTE, with a picture of a suicide bomber's blown-off head. Yuck-o! Gross! Nightmare city! Anyone who liked "Sleepy Hollow" will love your book. A vast market of teenage American horror-pic buffs awaits your exploitation.

Plus you are so prolific. Your work and your name turn up everywhere. **And one has to admire the single-minded devotion, the passionate commitment, with which you promote your cause of getting the whole world to fear and hate the LTTE.**

But man, you must be sweating and trembling all the time, thinking what the Tigers might do to you. I worry about you for this reason. The fact that such obsessive phobias are common does not make them any less painful for the sufferers. The good news is they are treatable. The first step toward healing must be taken by you, however. You must confront the fact that your fears are in your own mind. They are not out there in the real world. Sure there are beasts in the jungle, but the beast of your fancy is not among them. Once you see this, you can be helped. You will, I hope, be relieved to learn of my own research findings, which indicate that the LTTE is nowhere near as dangerous as you imagine.

Here are some things to consider.

First of all, the "suicide bomb syndrome" of which you write is comprised of two components: (a) suicidal people, and (b) bombs. **Sadly, on your home island, there live many many suicidal people, and also, on your home island, are vast quantities of arms, munitions, and explosives.** Never mind how they got there. They are there. And your government keeps buying new ones, and keeps putting them in the hands of soldiers, who keep leaving the army and taking their weapons with them. Under such circumstances, it becomes quite easy for you or me or anyone else with a few thousand rupees to construct a suicide bomber.

Moreover, if you have ever contemplated suicide yourself (heaven forbid) you will know that one of the strongest deterrents to suicide attempts is the fear that they will fail, and/or that the person attempting the suicide will undergo extreme suffering in the process. **That Sri Lankans in general are determined and brave people when it comes to suicide is attested by the fact that the preferred method of self-destruction there is consumption of pesticide, which leads to a very painful death indeed.**

Now, as compared to swallowing pesticide, the beauty of blowing yourself up, as a means of putting an end to it all, is the instantaneousness and certainty of it all. You press the switch and blam-o! you're gone. Your head flies off, you're dead for sure, and you probably never feel a thing. Plus if you're angry - as are many suicidal people - you leave a horrible mess behind, that other folks have to clean up.

In the case of the recent "aborted" attempt on your President's life, it would seem that quite a large number of people were angry with her. **Among these people would be, not only a few Tamils, but also disabled veterans opposed to the war, and their families, and the families of young Sinhala boys who died or went**

Contd. overleaf

missing in the war and never were even acknowledged. If I were the mother or sister of one of those boys, I would be raging mad, I tell you. If I had a chance to blow myself up, and take out the person who ordered the death of my son, or even just shame and disfigure her, would I do it? If I were the mother of one of those boys? You betcha !

Thus, when you write, "In South Asia, the LTTE is the only suicide capable group," you are quite wrong. Farmers whose crops have failed are a quite suicide-capable group, as *Frontline* itself will show you. Young people who have lost all hope of a happy future life are another such group. The more you deprive them of hope, the more you push them to suicide. **This point has been made so many times before, by so many people, one would think that you of all readers (do you read anyone's writing but your own?) might have taken notice. If you want to stop suicide-bombing in Sri Lanka, stop the suicide epidemic there. Give people a reason to live. Ask your government to stop taking away people's reasons to live - their educational opportunities, their opportunities to move from one place to another without fear of arrest, their opportunities to worship peacefully at churches and temples, their opportunities to work the fields, their opportunities to marry and have children and live normal lives. Leave them these opportunities and I guarantee the suicide rate will go down, and so will the number of people who join the LTTE.**

War profiteering

This point, so often repeated, so glaringly obvious, is ignored by two kinds of people: those who desire the war to continue because they want revenge, and those who desire the war to continue because they profit from it. I think both kinds exist on your island.

In your *Frontline* article, you mention a series of acts for which LTTE suicide bombers are held responsible. I believe they may have committed some of these acts. I am not at all certain they committed every one of them.

One example is the bombing of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy about two years ago. At the time, I was living in Batticaloa district, in a village under the control of the LTTE. We read about the bombing in the newspapers. I asked one member of the LTTE, "Did the LTTE really do this?" He answered,

Palestinian Hamas "death squad" who fight Israeli terrorism

"We get blamed for any trouble that happens." I asked another. He answered, "I don't know." So, they could have been lying - one must not discount that possibility. I asked civilians. They said the LTTE did it to prove that they could do it, to prove that no matter how much security and defenses the Army put up, the LTTE could still get through. But, they added, of course they didn't know, they were just guessing. These were civilians who did not support the LTTE, but were quietly happy that the Temple of the Tooth had been bombed, because so many of their own places of worship had been bombed. A couple of weeks later, the LTTE issued a public statement, categorically denying any involvement in the bombing of the Temple of the Tooth. This statement was published in one of the Tamil newspapers. Everyone ignored this statement. But why would the LTTE deny performing this act if their very aim was to prove that they could do it, and, on top of that, if the rural civilian populace, that formed their substrate, condoned this particular bombing? It is a big mystery. They might, after all, have just kept quiet.

But journals like Frontline and too many others take it for granted that the LTTE did this bombing, and that, and the other - often with no credible evidence at all. The recent package bomb explosion in Vavuniya exemplifies this trend. Anyone could have done it. But even Amnesty International has assumed that the LTTE were the perpetrators. We have been shown no proof of this, not even credible evidence. Friends, please - anyone can make a bomb. Condemn the act. That's fine. But do not judge a party guilty of that act until you have proof. And please do not hide behind "widely believed."

Fervid exponent

Now, back to Rohan Gunaratna. You have said in your *Frontline* article that "The LTTE in Sri Lanka is among the deadliest exponents of the [suicide bombing] syndrome." This is pure projection, Rohan. Try to see. You may not be deadly, but you yourself are the most fervid exponent of the suicide bombing syndrome that I know of. This "syndrome" is a theory that you passionately want the world to believe in. It is your own pet theory. In other words, it is your invention. Give it up.

Consider: if the LTTE have conducted assassinations of political leaders and others, they are neither the first nor the only people to do this. If you are alarmed at the fact of assassination, this is reasonable. To imagine that suicide-bombing is somehow more of a threat than other forms of killing is silly. Assassination by suicide-bombing is demonstrably unreliable. You call it "lethally accurate" but it fails more often than it succeeds. This is for the simple reason that the killer cannot aim at his or her target, and must decide on the spur of the moment, in the midst of a chaotic situation, when to detonate the explosive. If the LTTE are still using this inefficient method of assassination, that is their problem, not yours. Be glad they do not prefer snipers.

Rohan Gunaratna and his Bread & Butter problem

We have already addressed the issue of suicide. The LTTE have among their ranks a large number of young people who are ready to die. I can testify from experience that these young people have already decided to die even before they join the movement. They join it primarily for this reason. They do not expect to return to civilian life, where they foresee a bleak future or none at all. The LTTE trains them and sends them into combat. Black Tigers are included in (some, not all) combat missions. It is in combat that Black Tigers are probably most effective, because at the cost of their lives they make holes in enemy fortifications. Black Sea Tigers ram explosive-laden speedboats against ships and blow the ships up. If the LTTE had an airforce, they could bomb the ships and ground fortifications from the air, instead, and the attacks would be much more deadly. But they do not have an airforce, et cetera, so they make use of their own brave combatants instead.

They honor all those who died in combat, including enemy soldiers whose bodies they are left with. We cannot fault them for this, unless we fault the glorification of warfare throughout history and across the globe. In countless wars, countless combatants have gone knowingly to their deaths, and have been honored as heroes.

Strategy of the poor

In this and most other respects, the LTTE's behavior is not new. So-called "suicide terrorism" is another name for murder-suicide, which requires no special technology, and which happens every day during domestic disputes. It only becomes "terrorism" when it is part of war. In warfare - precisely because this tactic requires no special technology, but only courage and commitment on the part of those who deploy it - suicide killing is a strategy of the poor. In spirit, it is the same as peasant insurrections of early centuries, in which the peasants knew they would be killed, and only hoped to do some damage to their overlords in the process. No rich and powerful nation need resort to this tactic to achieve its aims. It is therefore contradictory to argue that the spread of "suicide terrorism" is a modern, well-financed, hi-tech development, on a par with the internet (where, in other articles, you claim "terrorism" also has found a home, on the grounds that supporters of the LTTE have put up a few websites - along with millions of other people of extremely diverse tastes and opinions). What you call "terrorism" looks like simple freedom of speech to me.

Ethnic minorities

In a similar vein, you state:

"The vulnerability of any ethnic group driven by ethnic nationalism to the use of the tactic of suicide terrorism is demonstrated in the Sri Lankan case. At a global level, suicide terrorism is driven not only by religious but also ethnic nationalism. In the long term, a higher number of ethnic communities are at risk of experiencing conflicts driven by ethnic nationalism. Only four percent of the countries in the world have just one ethnic community. By understanding both the contexts of and the vulnerability of separatist groups to the use of suicide terrorism, the threat can be addressed proactively and comprehensively."

This paragraph deserves more than one reading. Please correct me if I am wrong in drawing these implications from it. First, "suicide terrorism" goes together with "ethnic nationalism." Second, the four percent of the countries in the world that have only one ethnic community are the least "vulnerable" to "suicide terrorism" driven by "ethnic nationalism." And third, "separatist groups" are especially prone to the "use of suicide terrorism." Therefore, the safest bet is to be or become a country with only one ethnic community, because that country will suffer no ethnic nationalism, and consequently no suicide terrorism. Or, in short, the *existence* of an ethnic minority within a country conduces to suicide terrorism, because all perpetrators of suicide terrorism are members of ethnic minorities. It seems that you (RG) are suggesting that expulsion or elimination of ethnic minorities is the best way to combat the growing "threat" of "suicide terrorism."

In a subsequent paragraph, however, you seem to suggest that expulsion of ethnic minorities is not the answer to the problem. You say, "North American and Western European security and intelligence agencies assess suicide terrorism as a threat to Western security." How is it a threat to them? Because they are "witnessing both enhanced migration of displaced persons and their sustenance by fledgling diaspora and ethnic communities." Such groups might harbor suicide bombers who might strike at targets "far away from the theatres of conflict" and the very possibility of such events "can have implications for states hosting migrant refugee communities as well as those intervening in conflicts." In short, to provide a home to refugees forced to leave their native homes is to foster international terrorism, in the form of suicide bombing.

So, where are these refugees to go? If you do not want the members of these minority ethnic communities to stay where they were born, and you do not want anyone else to give them a place to live, the only solution would be to kill them all. Is this what you are suggesting? Why not come out and say it then? I have read through your whole article carefully, and have not found you proposing any other solution.

Great sence of humour

After all, even "one suicide bomber can have a profound effect on the political, military, and economic contexts, especially in peace-building situations." **You cite the military occupations of Jaffna (by the SLA), Lebanon (by the US Marines and French paratroopers), and the whole of Sri**

Contd. overleaf

Lanka by the IPKF as examples of "peace-building situations." Great sense of humor, Rohan.

It gets even funnier. We find that "Even for states with sophisticated military and intelligence apparatuses, suicide terrorism is hard to combat." Well, yeah. These apparatuses cannot even deal with simple suicide. Somehow their presence seems to increase its incidence. What in the world went wrong?

Poor ol' Wile.E. Coyote. No matter what contraptions he builds, he cannot capture the roadrunner. The boulder always falls on his own head, the stick of dynamite always blows up in his own face. All he wants to do is devour the roadrunner, and instead he becomes the victim of his own devices, and his own obsessions. In his eyes, the roadrunner is a source of fury because it will not let him devour it. We laugh and laugh. But of course, there is no valid analogy between children's cartoon characters and great nation-states dealing with deadly "suicide terrorists."

Research funding

And poor ol' Rohan. "After nearly two decades of suicide terrorism," you observe, "systematic research examining this phenomenon evades both the scholar and the analyst..." In other words, you seem to have failed to get the picture. **You blame "a lack of intensive research into group dynamics as well as the political, military and socio-economic contexts that spawn and sustain suicide terrorism." In other words, to solve this problem, you need more research funding. Could this be the real reason why you are writing this article? Are you living on soft money? Is there a chance your grant may not be renewed? May I suggest a solution? Get a regular, honest job.**

But, okay, this isn't fair. After all, toward the end of your article, it seems as though you almost see the light. In the sentence just after the one quoted above, you say, "[W]idespread poverty and underdevelopment exist in the West Bank, Gasa, Lebanon, southeastern Turkey and northeastern Sri Lanka, which form the recruiting ground for a bulk of the suicide bombers." Yes! Rohan, you are almost there! And you continue ...

Raping civilian girls

"Instead of regulating the environmental factors and group dynamics, states respond to the threat in different ways..." Okay, okay, getting there. Think about the group dynamics of soldiers raping civilian girls. Think about the environmental factor of poverty ...

"For instance, Israel responds reactively to the effects of suicide terrorism by destroying the homes of the suicide bombers and prosecuting potential suicide bombers." Yes! Rohan, you are hot on the trail of the truth. Sri Lanka does the same thing, only worse. Don't you see? Just a little bit more ...

"As a result [of Israeli persecution] suicide attacks have become more ruthless ..."

I think maybe you're there, Rohan. **Persecution of an ethnic group results in their striking back. And the more you persecute them, the more they will strike back. And "suicide bombers" are *poor* , Rohan, they are *poor.* Very, very poor. They have nothing to lose by dying - don't you get it? And if in their deaths they can do something to help their people, to drive away the oppressor, they will do it. This is absolute hard-core human nature. Self-sacrifice to save the people you love.**

You know the truth, the simple truth, just say it. Feed the poor. Stop persecuting ethnic minorities. No more terrorism. Problem solved.

But having gotten so close, at the end of your article you back down again, and you say, "In Sri Lanka and other states, the effectiveness of the state response to suicide terrorism has not been assessed." I think it has, Rohan. By lots of people. You just are too chicken to say it.

And the last page of your article is all about how more research has to be done, extensive and deep research, and this research must focus precisely on your specialty, "suicide terrorism," which you are at pains to point out is quite distinct from other forms of suicide and also quite distinct from other forms of terrorism.

Least studied problem

And so you conclude, "As a political and social phenomenon as well as a security threat, suicide terrorism is a least studied problem."

And thereby you reveal, just as we suspected before, what your true motivation is. You are not really committed to fighting the LTTE. **This research specialty is just your bread-and-butter. You need for the answer not to be found, because if it is, you've lost your current means of subsistence. Everyone needs to eat after all, and all of us academics have constantly to justify our work in one way or another. Now I can understand you. You are not sick, you are just doing your job. In a way I am relieved.**

But in another way, I am deeply saddened.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

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India's inhumanity towards Sri Lankan Tamil refugees!

REPORT ON THE CONDITIONS IN THE SPECIAL CAMP FOR REFUGEES AT TIPPU MAHAL, VELLORE BY THE PEOPLES UNION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES (PUCL)

SUDHA RAMALINGAM,

(President, PUCL-TN & Pondy)

The Indian sub continent has been a host to many refugees for several decades now. One of the countries from which there is a major influx of refugees is Sri Lanka that is caught up in ethnic conflict. Fearing persecution by the Sinhalese chauvinists and the Sri Lankan government, several thousands of Tamils have fled to South India especially Tamil Nadu. Though India has not ratified the International Convention on Refugees, 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, it has been accommodating the Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees.

The Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees fall into three categories. (1) Those in the Refugee Camps which number 133 as on date. There are about 65,000 refugees in them. (2) Refugees who maintain themselves outside the Camps. Obviously they belong to the well to do sections. Following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991, these refugees were directed by the State Government to register themselves in the nearest police stations. (3) Refugees who have been identified as belonging to militant groups. They are at present kept in three Special Camps: (a) Tippu Mahal, Vellore Fort, Vellore, (b) Chingleput and (c) Mellur.

After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi allegedly by supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Sri Lankan Refugees in India had to undergo severe ordeals. While the second category of the refugees escaped with mandatory registration in the police station with occassional enquiries and harassments by the police, the other two categories of refugees faced the worse. **The plight of these refugees especially those in the Special Camps has been a source of deep concern for PUCL since the detenues in the Special Camps do not enjoy even the rights of the convict prisoners lodged in ordinary prisons.** In order to gain a first hand knowledge of the conditions in the Special Camps the PUCL-Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry constituted a Fact Finding Team comprised of :

1. K. Manoharan, Vice President, PUCL-National

2. Sudha Ramalingam, Advocate & President, PUCL-TN & Pondy

3. Dr.V.Suresh, Advocate & General Secretary, PUCL-TN & Pondy

4. D.Nagasaila, Advocate & Member, PUCL- TN & Pondy

5. R.Venkatesh, Member, PUCL-TN & Pondy.

While the three members of the Team viz. K.Manoharan, Sudha Ramalingam and R.Venkatesh visited the Special Camp for Refugees at Tippu Mahal, Vellore, on 7.7.99 the other two members went about collecting documentary evidence relating to these Camps and summarizing the information obtained from the interviews they conducted at various occassions with some of the former inmates of the Special Camps.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VELLORE SPECIAL CAMP:

In the Vellore Fort, there are separate buildings namely, Tippu Mahal & Hyder Mahal used as Special Camps. These Special Camps were set-up on 14-12-1990. At the beginning 163 Sri Lankan Tamils were detained in Tippu Mahal and 120 families consisting of 491 persons were accommodated at Hyder Mahal. The Hyder Mahal inmates included males, females and children. But now the Hyder Mahal Camp has been closed and only the Tippu Mahal Camp exists. There are 56 detainees in this Camp.

PHYSICAL FEATURES & TOPOGRAPHY OF THE VELLORE SPECIAL CAMP:

Given below is brief description of the two camps at Vellore as stated in the report of Justice T.N. Singaravelu, one man commission of enquiry to probe on the incidents of escape of 43 inmates from the Special Camp, Tippu Mahal at Vellore. ((herein after referred to as the Commission Report)

Both the Special camps namely Tippu Mahal & Hyder Mahal are located inside the Vellore Fort. The entire Vellore Fort is a centrally protected monument under the Archeological survey of India Act and vested with the Archeological survey of India. The walls of the fort run for about 3 kms and it has a moat which has a width of 67 metres. The total carpet area of the Fort including the moat is 126 acres. The entire fort was built with granite, lime and mortar. Tippu Mahal and Hyder Mahal are situated in the South Western Corner of the Fort very close to the inner wall of the fort. The two mahals are situated adjacent to

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each other but separated by an old common wall. Tippu Mahal has 45 rooms in the ground floor and 67 rooms in the first floor. Hyder Mahal has got 65 rooms in the ground floor and 86 rooms in the first floor. None of these rooms have doors and hence the inmates can move freely from one room to another.

There are three iron gates each in the two mahals and these iron gates are situated one after the other. In other words, to enter into either of the mahals one has to go through all the three gates and there is no other way or passage than these gates for ingress and egress. There is a 6 feet high barbed wire fencing over the outer walls and beyond that there is a six feet compound wall. Beyond the wall, is a moat which is normally of full of water and there is thick growth of elephant grass on the southern and the eastern sides.

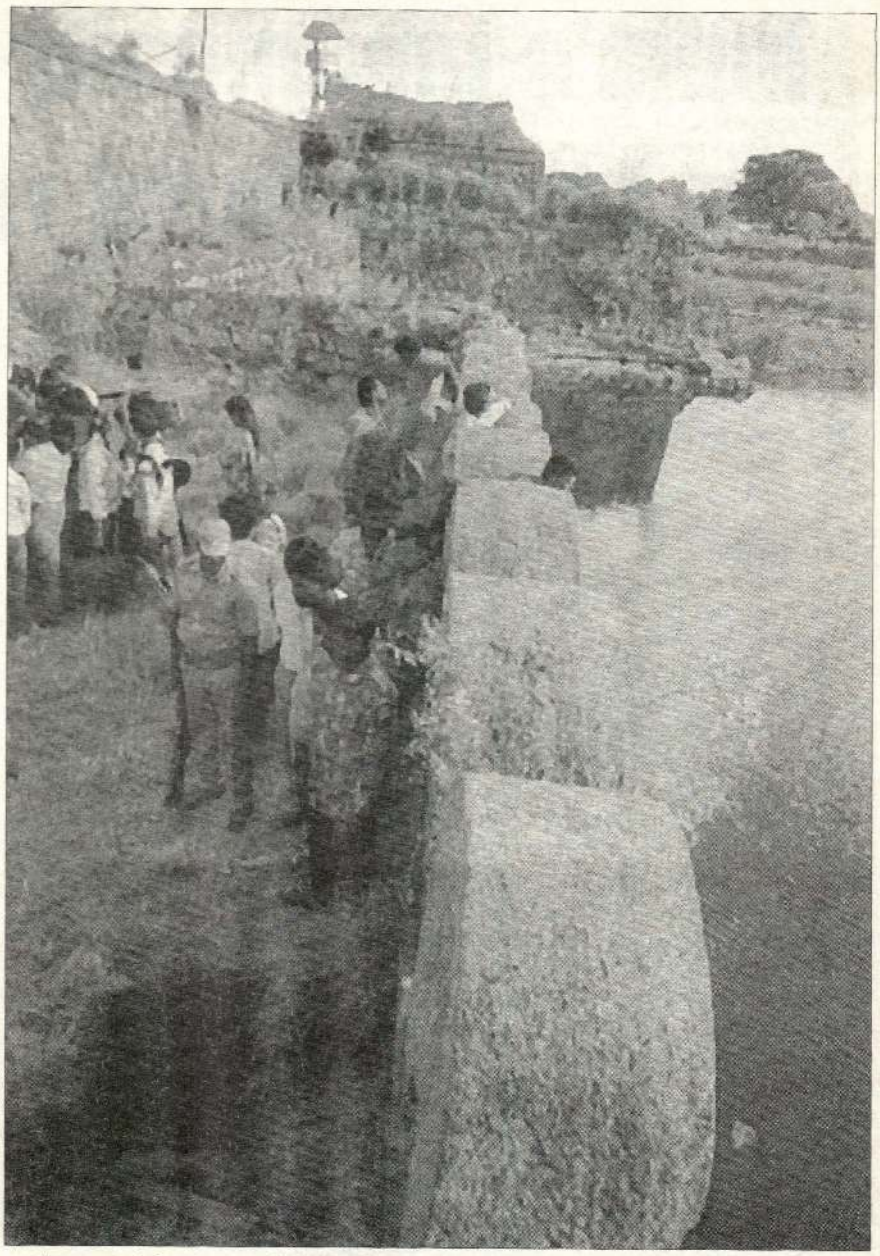
ADMINISTRATION OF THE CAMPS:

The General Administration of the camp is the responsibility of the Revenue Department. The Police Department is responsible for the Security. The Revenue Department takes care of the food, clothing, health & sanitation of the inmates. The expenses incurred under various heads are borne by the Revenue Department. The Tippu Mahal is in charge of the Principal, Police Recruit School who is also known as the Camp Commandant. He is in overall charge of the special camp. He is assisted by a Chief Drill Instructor and a Chief Law Instructor who were formerly serving in the Police Recruit Schools.

SPECIAL CAMP - A HIGH SECURITY PRISON :

According to the Government of Tamil Nadu, legally a Special Camp is not a jail or a prison and the provisions of the jail manual are not applicable to these camps. The persons in the special camps are not prisoners or convicts or under-trials or accused of any specific offence under Indian Penal Code.

However, the security arrangements in these special camps are unprecedented and surpasses the security arrangements in any of the central prisons in the state of Tamil Nadu. As per the version of the witnesses in Commission Report (Page 17 Para 34) there is a 24 hour sentry posted at the main entry gate and the entrance to the Tippu Mahal is guarded by two police person armed with light machine guns. These two persons are in the cadre of Head Constable and Constable of Special Police. There are 3 gates, which have to be crossed before reaching the main gate, and all the three gates are guarded and locked. There are 5 watch- towers manned by the sentries throughout night and day armed with machine guns. There are also police constables posted around the camp. There are also focus lights directed towards the Tippu Mahal and sirens are also installed. There are moving sentries doing guard duty for a period of 3 hours by rotation. Superior officers like the Inspectors, Deputy Superintendent of Police and Superintendent of Police make surprise visits to check the security



An outside view of the Vellore Fort from which some detainees escaped in 1995 by digging an underground tunnel.

arrangements.

RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENTS OF INMATES:

As per the Commission Report, the inmates of the Tippu Mahal are not permitted to go out of the camp. In the words of the Commission, **the inmates are in RIGOROUS CONFINEMENT in the Special camp and the long detention has made the inmates desperate.** Ironically, though the persons are not prisoners or convicts or under-trials or accused of any offence they are not permitted to leave the camp. All the three gates of the camp are kept under lock and key under the Tamil Nadu Special Police Guard. There are armed sentries posted at the gates all the 24 hours. The main gate will be opened only for supplying food, taking Roll-call, conducting search and for taking the inmates to the hospital whenever required. Even on these occasions, Police escorts accompany the inmates.

In fact, even facilities of parole, which are generally available to convicts, and provision of coming out on bail available to under-trials is not available to the inmates as they are neither convicts nor under-trials. Their status is peculiar and is worse off for their peculiarity.

PROVISION FOR FOOD:

At present the government allots Rs.20 /- per day per adult and Rs.14/- per day per child for every refugee housed in the Camps including the Special Camps. Whereas the prescribed allowance is paid directly to the inmates in all other Camps, in the Special Camps of Vellore and Mellur the administrative authorities have entrusted cooking and distribution of food to contractors to whom the said amount is paid. The detenues in these two Camps are not allowed to cook their own food. In Chingleput Special Camp however the detenues are allowed to do their own cooking as the authorities were unable to find suitable contractors. In this Camp women refugees are living with their husbands. There are two children below the age of 5 years in this Camp.

VISITORS:

Visitors to the camp are restricted. There are no specific provisions or guidelines which streamlines the procedure for visiting persons detained in the camps. By contrast, the prisoners in India enjoy a Constitutional guarantee of enjoying all fundamental rights within the prison walls. The Supreme Court of India has recognised the rights of prisoners to meet and communicate with members of their families and friends. In fact, the Supreme Court of India, in several judgements has advocated that prisoners should be permitted to meet their families and be in touch with them so that their transition to normal life after the period of incarceration is made easier and smoother. However, in the camps visiting is bogged down by bureaucratic red-tapism. The exaggerated security arrangements is itself a deterrent for ordinary visitors.

Editor too was an inmate at Tippu Mahal

The Editor of HOT SPRING was himself an inmate of Tippu Mahal eight years ago. Having served a one year jail term under India's National Security Act (NSA) at both Vellore and Madras jails he was picked up by the Q branch of the Tamil Nadu police at the Madras GH where he was under police guard and court custody, and taken to Vellore "Special Refugee Camp". He was told he was now being held under the Foreigners' Act, although under Indian law, a person cannot be held repeatedly under two different Acts. On an appeal made to the High Court by his wife, he was taken back to the hospital after an arbitrary detention of about ten days at this camp.

Further, the procedures for visiting are cumbersome. A person desirous of meeting the detenues in the camp has to make an application to the Special Tahsildar. The Special Tahsildar sits in the Collectorate several kms away from the Camp. The Special Tahsildar seeks the comments of the Superintendent of Police on the application and only thereafter permission is granted. Generally for the papers to move it takes several days. It is all the more difficult for Sri Lankans who are in other refugee camps to meet those in the Special Camps as they have to seek permission first to leave their camp and also to visit the Special Camp detenues.

The experiences of the members of the Fact-Finding Team itself is quite illustrative. The FFT after obtaining the clearance from the Superintendent of Police, Vellore was asked to meet the Q Branch Police (Intelligence Wing of the Police) at the camp gate. After, their identities were checked by the Q Branch Police all the FFT members were frisked by the Security persons. This process took about 2 hours and during this time the members had to wait outside the camp gate. Women visitors should necessarily be frisked by women constables. Invariably no women constables are present at the camp site and they have to be called from Vellore. This results most times in women visitors having to spend the whole day in waiting for the arrival of the woman constable to carry out the frisking.

INDEFINITE INCARCERATION:

It is pertinent to point out that though the inmates are technically and legally not prisoners their plight is worse than those prisoners who are convicted and sentenced to specific terms of imprisonment. The so- called inmates have been in detention for several years now and there is no time limit specified for their release. This can have psychologically a very traumatising and demoralising influence on the detenues. Even according to the Commission which enquired into the escape of the 43 inmates *"admittedly these inmates or most of them are in rigorous confinement in the special camp for five or six years continously. Not much of action was taken by the centre to repatriate them to Sri Lanka. Obviously this long detention made*

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the inmates desperate and they were working out ways and means of getting out of the camp somehow or other from time to time".

Till date the Government of India has not evolved a policy as to how to deal with persons who have been detained in the camp. **There are several persons who have not come out side the camp for more than ten years now.** They are not sure as to when they are likely to be released and as to when they can lead a normal life, by pursuing a profession or employment and living with their families. The uncertainity of their incarceration is itself agonising and inhuman.

DETENTION OR RESIDENCE?

The reality of the persons detained in the camp is that they are under 24 hours detention in conditions which are worse then those prevalent in the Central Prison in India. The detenues do not enjoy any of the rights and privileges enjoyed by the convict and other undertrial prisoners lodged in the various prisons because their status is neither that of convicts or undertrials. However their reality is negatived by legality.

As per the law all the persons detained in the camp are pursuant to orders passed under sec.3 (2) (e) of the Foreigners Act 1946. As per this provisions the Central Government or the State Government may by order among other things require a foreigners to reside in a particular place and impose any restrictions on his movements. Ostensibly all the persons detained in the camps is only a requirement to make the persons reside in a particular place and the total denial of liberty is a mere restrictions on their movements.

The challenge to the detention orders under the Foreigners Act, 1946, has been negatived by the Madras High Court (1995 2 law weekly (Criminal) 690 Raju @ Kalapathy Vs State of Tamil Nadu). The High Court held that detaining persons in the camps is not detention but a requirement to reside the a particular place. The absence of a fixed period of detention has also held to be not arbitrary because staying in special camps in not detention but merely a reasonable restriction on the freedom of movement.

Thus this duality between reality and legality has resulted in tens of persons being in detention for several years without any recourse or redress.

In fact in Chingleput camp where few families live, there are two children, who are growing up without knowing the world out side, without any education or any other kind of interaction with society.

It is pertinent to point out that despite the decision of the High Court that the persons in camps are not detained many of the Trial Court who have tried these persons have set off the period spent in the camps against their terms of sentence in several cases. This is the first of the judicial acknowledgment of the fact that persons in camps are indeed under detention.

VERSION OF MARAN AND KANAKASABAPATHY

S.Kanagasabapathy

Two of the camp inmates - Maran and Kanakasabapathy were interviewed by the FFT members. **Kanaka sabapathy is 77 years and Maran in his mid thirties. According to them many of the persons detained are physically maimed persons.** This is borne out by the testimony given by the officials as reported in the Commission Report (Page 3 para 8). The Team Members collected the details of the following handicapped persons detained in this Camp:

1. Ansar : Right foot disabled due to gun shot injury.

2. Mukilan: Totally blind.

3. Ranga: Has lost both the hands below the wrists, lost vision in the left eye and lost hearing faculty in the left ear.

4. "Moscow": Lost the right hand below the wrist and the thumb in the left hand.

5. "Hitler": Lost both hands below the wrist and totally blind.

6. Jerry: Right leg paralysed.

7. Ajanthan: Has a bullet embedded in the head resulting in paralysis of right leg, right hand and has lost the hearing faculty in the right ear.

8. Yogan: Left leg damaged by gun shot injury.

9. Jeevan: Right foot severed.

10. Radha: Lost vision in the right eye.

11. Nimilan: Lost the vision in the left eye.

12. Shiva: Left foot severed.

Most of the detenues are not facing any criminal charges by the Indian Courts or if convicted, have already served their sentence. They were eager to rejoin their families. However, they were dependent on the state agencies to process their papers.

They also reported that in the recent past they have not been permitted to even receive phone calls from their family members who are living in other countries. Though the families were willing to sponsor them, and the State Government had permitted some to leave, they could not do so, for lack of travel documents. They requested the PUCL to request the UNHCR office at Chennai to intervene on their behalf.

On 10th July 1999 two of the Team Members viz. K.Manoharan and Sudha Ramalingam went to UNCHR office at Bishop Gardens, R.A.Puram, Chennai and met Mr. Narasimha Rao, Liaison Officer. He told the Team Members that since India has not signed the Convention on Refugees,1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the UNCHR has to operate with a very restricted mandate which does not give it access to the special camps such as the one at Tippu Mahal. The Team Members however requested him to explore all avenues to have an access to the Special Camp and gain a first hand knowledge about the conditions there. He was also requested to help the detenues to get their travel documents and other supporting papers to leave

India. He told the Team Members that UNCHR can not commit itself in any manner in view of the limited mandate it enjoys in Indian but he could intervene at the time of the receipt of proper sponsorship papers in the concerned embassies and consulates in respect of the refugees.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. For those who have already served prison terms for their conviction and for those who have been acquitted of the charges after having undergone a long period of incarceration as undertrials it is unjust to be kept in further detention in the form of confinement in such Special Camps. All the interns in the Special Camp at Tippu Mahal, Vellore excepting a few are not willing to go back to Sri Lanka. They apprehend arrest, detention and torture by the Sri Lankan authorities. The Tamil Nadu government should therefore immediately consider issuing orders permitting them to leave for the country of their choice.

2. The Tamil Nadu government should also consider restoring the facilities for the interns of the camp to receive the incoming calls from their relatives abroad.

3. All the physically disabled interns should immediately be released and permitted to join their family / friends / well wishers in India or abroad.

4. The interns must be granted periodical paroles to visit places and people of their choice as is provided for the prisoners in the prisons.

5. The interns admittedly being refugees and not prisoners, they should be treated like any other refugee kept in other camps and allowed to do their own cooking and also have their relatives or friends stay with them inside the camp. Keeping the interns for several years - even more than a decade in confinement in the camp is a gross violation of human rights.

6. The national and State Human Rights Commissions should visit the refugee camps in periodical intervals and ensure that human rights standards are safeguarded for the interns.

7. The interns should be allowed to communicate with the outside world freely with out subjecting their letters to censor.

8. The Tamil Nadu government should explore the avenues to work with the UNCHR in a more meaningful way especially in respect of getting travel documents for those who have sponsors abroad.

Signed: K.Manoharan; Sudha Ramalingam; Dr.V.Suresh; D.Nagasaila; R.Venkatesh.

SUDHA RAMALINGAM (PRESIDENT PUCL-TN & PONDY)

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WHY INDIA DENIES UN ACCESS TO TAMIL REFUGEE CAMPS

UN Human Rights groups are not allowed access to the Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps in Tamil Nadu, because the Indian government fears that they would be "critical of conditions in the camps".

Schaok, the report suggests that "it is part of the government of India's policy to ignore the refugee problem by neglecting camp conditions in an attempt to pressure the refugees to leave when the sit-

The asbestos structures that house refugees in a camp at South Arcot district in Tamil Nadu

This is the charge made by the United States Commission for Refugees in its latest report. The Commission addresses issues relating to refugees around the world, and assesses first-hand conditions for the displaced.

The report indicates that about 70,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees live in 131 camps in Tamil Nadu. Quoting researchers A.Arulananthan and E.Van

uation in Sri Lanka allows it".

The report says there are 2.2.lakh Tibetans and Sri Lankans who have taken shelter in the country, and they constitute India's largest refugee population. The 1.1 lakh Tibetans who live in India, though welcomed by a "generous" Indian government, are worried that increasing numbers of refugees pouring into the country might strain relations with their host.

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An Eelam Tamil makes music in California !

Who is Kavichandran Alexander ? Has any Hot Spring reader heard of him ? Not likely, but you ought to know about him anyway; firstly because he is a Tamil born and raised on the island of Ceylon, as he says, not Sri Lanka; secondly, because the International Herald Tribune thought it fit to publish a feature about him in its issue of January 26, 2000.

Kavichandran

The writer of the feature, Mike Zwerin, says, datelined Paris:

"Meeting by the River",recorded in the chapel of St.Anthony's Seminary in Santa Barbara, was produced by Kavichandran Alexander a Tamil exile from Sri Lanka who is founder, president and only full-time employee of Water Lily Acoustics in the same Californian town. It won a Grammy and sold 200,000 copies, a world music hit.

Excerpts from the article:

"A Tamil born and raised on the island of Sri Lanka - he prefers to call it "Ceylon" - he left it in 1969 for Paris, London and Sweden before starting Water Lily Acoustics in 1984.

His apartment in Isla Vista, a short bicycle ride from the University of California at Santa Barbara, is small and cluttered. The limit of his ambition - he does not dream of hit records is to own a little house with no cockroaches and a small garden with a rose bush in Montecito,"the ritzy part of Santa Barbara, where the movie stars live".

He likes to sit in coffee shops and write album notes. He writes them for every Water Lily release, five a year. (One quotes an 13th century poem - "today, like every other day, we wake up empty and frightened "). Made in chapels, churches and small halls mostly in Santa Barbara, the albums are, however, not live concert recordings. He invites "a select group of friends who share my vision to provide symbiotic feedback so that the musicians are not playing in an empty room". He chuckles, "They also end up sharing the work, making tea or running to the store to pick up candles".

The use of old analogue technology combined with modern techniques results in "noticeably better sound", he says. Personally he prefers to listen to LPs, and to look at their "pleasing two-sided, 12 by 12 inch dimension". The CD was developed, he says, "only for "practical" reasons. This is our God today, practicality. Practicality was not an issue with Beethoven. Rodin chiseling away was not being "practical"".

.....He has no patience for idealists converted to the worship of the bottom line: "The record industry machine has grown into an unholy monster that is at the root of the sickness that mankind faces today." The volume and the register of his voice both mount: "The major multinational record companies are bent on plunder. Slash and burn, that's their thing".

On the contrary, he regards himself as providing medicine for "people living alone in apartments without light or air in, say, Birmingham, where it's dark and gray. **I want them to be able to listen to records by L.Subramaniam and Larry Coryell and be transported out of their dismal environment. We are living in dark times".** ❑

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PLEASE CONTACT: MR. M.K.SRITHARAN

Change of Address

Fairholme Road
Off Station Road
Harrow
Middlesex HA1 2TN
DX: 133196 (Harrow 4)

Tel: 0181- 515 7000
Fax: 0181- 933 1361

"It would be wise politics to stop the war and win the peace"

To: The Army Commander, Army Headquarters, Colombo, Sri Lanka

From: Lt.Col.AntonJ.N.Selvadurai, BlenheimCourt, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, U.K.

What I am suggesting above may sound ridiculous to you, but it is quite a wise thing to do, to save the island from further catastrophe and to save you from the criticism you would get from your own people.

I mean no offence, but the Sinhalese are great in that they can laugh at themselves. Their famous adage of themselves states: "Sinhala Modaya, Kavun Kanda Yodaya". While the latter part may not be true, the earlier part is entirely true. Everything that the Sinhala governments have done from the very beginning have been very foolish on the basis of "short term gains and long term losses". The language policy is an excellent example. **Likewise, your people have never got anything right, because your whole nation has been built on mythology, beginning from your very name "Sinhala" meaning that your original ancestor was a four-legged lion. Absurd. !!**

Historical animosity

In short, the cause is Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism and Anti-Tamil racism. This blunts your thinking and gives you an inferiority complex. But things have changed after you started the Genocidal war when you have to face reality and not live in the past,

Fighting a guerrilla army of the calibre of the LTTE is not a worthwhile thing to do anymore. You have lost so much, not only in lives and property, but also your credibility. So General, may I advise to ignore General Ratwatte and get your officers together and decide that it would be better you conceded to the situation and decide to stop the war for the general good. After all, discretion they say is the better part of valour.

It is a FACT OF LIFE that the Tamils are a separate nation and have been so historically. Why do you have this obsession with a unitary state ? "Unitary" would also mean unity and harmony as in a marriage of two persons. What you are trying to do is to force a marriage between dissenting and feuding partners who have been historical enemies. Does this sound sensible ? Would you force your daughter into such a marriage ? Would a Sinhala Buddhist force his daughter to marry a Tamil or a Muslim?

The Nayake Theros don't care because their lives are not affected their peace is not shattered, and they don't have to begging for food in their Mercedes saloons. Life for them is a bed of roses.

So please be realistic and not emotion influence your judgement. The fact is , you can't win any more, and it is not worth trying. Be man enough to accept the truth and negotiate to win the peace with two nations sharing the island and living in harmony with the common interest of the security and prosperity of the island.

President CBK in her emotional inaugration speech has been racist and has threatened the Tamil nation if they oppose a unitary state. This sort of racist imperialism is not accepted these days and besides it would be against human rights to force the Tamils into a unitary state when they have every right to have a free independent life like they had through Portuguese and Dutch colonial rule until the British lumped both people together under a common administration in 1833.

Up against a wall

You are up against a brick wall General, so do stop the war, save your face and help to bring peace to the island. If the British army could have withdrawn from India, so can you from the Tamil homelands.

Unity cannot be enforced. Especially so, after a long period of discrimination and oppression and when Tamils are considered aliens. The President herself said so last year in South Africa when she claimed that Tamils were not even an indigenous people. If Tamils refuse to cooperate in a Gandhian style what can you do? **As Anura Bandaranaike said recently in Parliament : "The war is unwinnable and Jaffna is ungovernable".**

You are wasting a lot of precious time, energy, money and blood, gentlemen,so get on with it and withdraw your troops from the tamil Homeland

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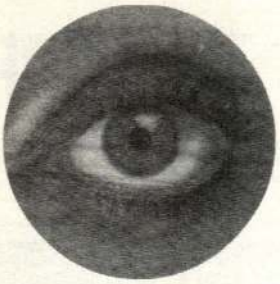


Peering into the future:

"Eelam - a reality in the 21st Century"

BY: SACHI SRI KANTHA
(FUKUROI CITY, JAPAN)

I predict that Eelam will be a reality iin the first quarter of the 21 st Century (before Prabhakaran reaches 70 years). Whether it will happen before the year 2010 or after, depends on multiple geo-political factors. To illustrate with a chemistry principle, a set of factors functioning as catalysts can bring out a quick completion of a reaction. In my opinion, the second and third generation of Tamils who are currently growing up in the USA, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Australia and other European nations can (and should) function as catalysts to influence the policies of their adopted nations.

Let us learn from a page in the history of the 20th Century. Israel became a reality for Jews in 1948, largely because of the influence wielded by the second and third generation American Jews (whose parents and grandparents escaped from the pogroms in European and Russian ghettos). Since the times of Harry Truman, the Jewish interests (in academic, business, bureaucratic and Hollywood circles) have made sure that American politicians support the birth and sustenance of Israel.

Thus, it is the duty of those who have settled now in affluent nations to instill the message of Tamil heritage to their offsprings and grandchildren. Of course, there are many methods to provide such instruction. I wish to propose one song which can serve as a 'pledge song' for Eelam Tamils in the diaspora.

In the mid 1960s, long before the the struggle for Eelam was in the thoughts of Sri Lankan Tamils, Kannadasan, the uncrowned poet laureate of Tamils, penned a lyric to one of MGR's movies, aptly named, ***Nadodi*** (The Vagabond). The word *Nadodi* itself is an apt one to describe the status of the Tamils who left their ancestral land, though one need not interpret it in a derisive context. Kannadasan's poignant song began with the lines,

"Naadu - athai Naadu - athai naadaa viddaal, ethu Veedu? "

In a play on the word 'naadu', which means 'homeland' (as a noun) and 'reach the goal' (as a verb), Kannadasan superbly highlighted the folk wisdom that one's real heaven (home) is in his or her homeland.

Even when i hum the lines of this particular lyric, I'm still astounded by Kannadasan's mastery of thoughts, words and vision, and he wrote these iines for MGR to mouth these lines (actually sung by T.M.Soundararajan) in that movie. The Tamil poet laureate stressed it to us, that even if our homeland is a desert, let us have boundaries with rock and mountains. There are rivers which flow into the fields, and lets be proud of our heroic traditions.

"Paalaivanam enra pothum Nam Naadu
Paaraimalaikooda nam ellai kodu.
Aaru nilam puainthu vizhaiynadum thottam
Veera samuthayame engal koodam. "

The next four lines of this lyric also shows that Kannadasan had anticipated the emergence of Tamil Tigers a decade ahead. One can call it as a poet's flight of fancy for word play or premonition of things to follow. But, these lines glitter like gems, and need no further explanation from me.

" Pasi enru varavoorku virunthaha moarum
Pahaivar muham paarthu puliyaaha cheerum
Nilathil uyir vaiththu urimai kondaadum
Ethirthu varuvorai uramahapoddum. "

The poet has noted, "We will provide food for those who come with hunger; to our adversaries, we turn into tigers; we will cherish our dear land, and will turn enemies into fertilisers for our land."

It is my view that the brothers and sisters who have stayed in Eelam have been doing their share in turning the last three lines of Kannadasan's vision into reality. Those of us who have left Eelam and living elsewhere should contribute to make Kannadasan's line ***"Pasi enru varavoorku virunthaahamaarum"*** a reality. ❑

THE TRAGIC PLIGHT OF TAMIL DETAINEES

More than two thousand Tamils are being detained in Sri Lanka today,most of them in jails and some of them locked up in police stations; for no chargeable offence, except that in the eyes of a cruel law - the Prevention of Terrorism Act - they being Tamils they are suspect of being either "terrorists" or supporters of "terrorism" by Sri Lankan definition. The detainees include men, women and even children, and the old and the sick. The ages vary from five years to seventy one.

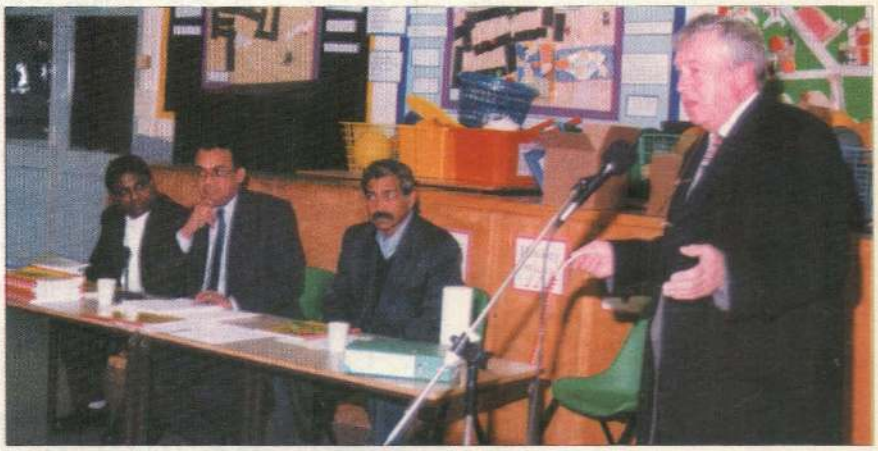
These detainees are kept for years without being charged or brought to trial before a court of law. These detentions are illegal under the common law but there are no organisations either to highlight the detainees' plight or to aid them in securing their release.

But in London now there has now emerged an organisation named Tamil Detainees Support Group, initiated by expatriate activists like M.Sivaraja, R.Jayadevan and M.Neminathan who have made it their mission to get the voice of the helpless detainees heard in the outside world. They have so far received nearly three hundred letters from those who are being kept in the Welikade and Kalutara prisons. These letters make pathetic reading . Some of them have been translated from Tamil to English and are published by the Group under the title : CHARGE US OR RELEASE US.

The document includes a note on Arrest and Detention of Tamils in Sri Lanka by Colombo Attorney at Law A.Vinayagamoorthy and extracts of reports published in the SRI LANKA MONITOR, published by the Refugee Council.

A note from the Chairman of the Group, Solicitor M.Neminathan says, inter alia:

Pictured at the launch of the Tamil Detainees Support Group's publication - CHARGE US OR RELEASE US - (from left to right) Easan who himself spent four years in Colombo's notorious Welikade jail), R.Jayadevan, Barry Gardiner, M.P. and Solicitor M.Neminathan.



The second picture shows Councillor Lawrie Pardoe addressing the gathering.

':...As can be seen from their letters, these detainees are very poor; they have no one to help them. Their age limit varies from five years to seventy-one ;some suffer from illness. Some are widows; in some cases both husband and wife have been arrested and detained leaving their children on the streets or having to plead for the charity of neighbours or relatives. In another case a widowed mother and her daughter were detained leaving four young children in a desperate position. Most of the detainees are the breadwinners of the family.

"These detainees are kept in prisons alongside hardened Sinhala criminals and drug addicts who illtreat them in various ways. There were incidents

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when convicted Sinhala prisoners, with the connivance of prison guards and soldiers attacked the Tamil detainees. In July 1983, the Sinhala convicts in Welikade prison butchered to death fifty-three Tamil political prisoners. In February 1996 the Tamil detainees in Magazine prison were seriously assaulted with metal rods, clubs and cricket bats by prison guards. On 22nd April 1987 Sinhala prisoners attacked Tamil detainees who were on hunger strike. On 12th December 1997 three Tamil detainees were hacked to death by Sinhala convicts while prison staff and members of the armed forces stood by and watched. Several other detainees were injured

"As this publication was going to press we received the news that Sinhala prison guards in Kalutara prison had beaten to death three Tamil detainees and wounded another 34 on 6th January 2000. There is no sign that the situation will improve in the near future.

"Female detainees are not exempted from abuse. Convicted drug dealers known as "Kude Amme" subject them to ill-treatment. Their plight is unbearable.

"Most of the detainees have been tortured during the interrogation by the State armed forces. "Confessions" have been manufactured under torture and they are the only evidence available against the detainees, but the onus of proving that the confessions were obtained under duress falls on the detainees....

"We are also concerned about the plight of the Tamil detainees in the "Special Camps" in South India and we will be taking up their cases with the appropriate authorities soon.....

On behalf of the Tamil Detainees Support Group I appeal to you to join hands with us in solidarity with the detainees so that they can be set free".

***

Dossier to be sent to British Foreign Office

Toby Harris, a senior local councillor in London and a Life Peer who was himself present at the release of the document prepared by the Tamil Detainees Support Group states in a Press release:

"These letters make compelling reading and graphically illustrate the desperate circumstances of some of the detainees. I will be sending this dossier to the Foreign Office, so that Ministers will be aware of the work of the Tamil Detainees Support Group and what they have uncovered".

Toby Harris is one of the most senior local councillors in London He chairs the Association or London Government (represer.ting all 33 London local authorities) which in the absence of a Mayor acts as the democratic voice for London. He was appointed a Life Peer by Prime Minister Tony Blair in June 1998 and was one of the leaders of the campaign for London to have an elected Mayor and strategic authority. He is Labour's Greater London Assembly spokesperson for Brent and Harrow.

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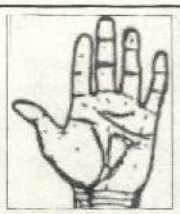

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Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

"A BRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER"

Deirdre McConnell
(Director - *International Programme for the Tamil Centre for Human Rights)*

By: Deirdre McConnell

I first met Mr Ponnambalam in London five years ago, and have met him at many human rights events, conferences and seminars in various countries since, in Europe and further a-field. Wherever Kumar participated in gatherings and spoke his mind, there was an extra energy and confidence present in those around him - inspired by his energy, his commitment and his courage.

Even though Kumar always told us he may be at risk of losing his life for speaking out about the atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil people, and though we were acutely aware of this danger his assassination came as a great shock.

It was a real privilege to have worked with Kumar on various human rights matters. His deep faith in God, and the fact that he did everything according to his conscience was both striking and moving, knowing that he did so in the full knowledge he may be killed for it. All levels of people in international human rights organisations and international bodies who met him appreciate his qualities and his dedicated work.

I saw in Geneva how UN officials responded to him. It was crystal clear to all that his presentation, strong and articulate, came from the confidence born of honest and sincere convictions and thorough knowledge. He possessed a passionate love of justice and a deep feeling of connectedness to his Tamil sisters and brothers suffering in the North and East of the island, and languishing in the jails in the South. The agony and pain of the people came through in his presentation of the atrocities committed against the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan government, and he conveyed this truth in ways that were entirely appropriate to the particular forum he was addressing at any one time.

Kumar never overwhelmed his listener/s into passive inaction, or bored them with too much detail or with irrelevancies - but rather, he focussed on the essential, the essence. He listened sensitively and very carefully. Those who came into contact with him were touched, and were galvanized into action. He treated each person with dignity and respect, with politeness and charm. The human rights case of the Tamil people was expertly presented by Kumar in a forceful and convincing manner, with factual and legal precision. With assertiveness but not aggression. After his presentation it was possible to see how UN personnel reacted. They took up the issues he presented, and were in no doubt about the severity of the situation or the need for action to be taken.

He never hesitated to confront and challenge anyone, including the Sri Lanka Ambassador in Geneva.

Kumar's work and his personality itself, fully impressed on non-Sri Lankans and non-Tamils the urgency of the human rights situation. His courage and indomitable spirit were unconsciously revealed in the very fact that he would soon be returning to Colombo, a fact which carried an unspoken poignancy. He never laboured the point, however, but got on with what he had to do. Despite the tremendous weight of his work, Kumar took things in his stride. He did not make a fuss. He knew what he had to do and was committed to it with determination, and selflessness. Also with wit and a lively sense of humour! Kumar would be as comfortable talking to human rights activists in their own front room, whatever nationality they were, whatever country, as he would be speaking from a podium, key note speaker in an international conference.

Mr Ponnambalam left a successful law practise to travel for months and months outside the country never hesitating to speak out about the suffering of the Tamil people in forum after forum, tirelessly presenting the case with his skill acquired as a barrister. Always accompanied by his wife, Yogi, he gave expression to his passionate thirst for human rights, for true Peace with Justice. He could have lived a more comfortable life, avoided controversy, his wife Yogi quietly pursuing her professional medical career uninterrupted. Yet they never hesitated to come to many places to speak out.

Contd. overleaf

Kumar's everyday experiences in Colombo gave him a wealth of in-depth detailed knowledge of the human rights violations suffered, by the Tamil people he represented in Court. His reports from Judicial Medical Officers were invaluable, as well as other help he gave, in producing reports for TCHR. Always willing to do the maximum to help, he advised and encouraged, with a humility and a kindness which will never be forgotten.

His killing has thrown into stark relief the cost of speaking out for Civil and Political rights for Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka.

It is not easy to recover from this loss. The Sri Lankan Governemnt has certainly targeted the correct person - a person so effective in presenting the case of the Tamils in the international arena.

Kumar was a devoted family man. Never a day passed without him phoning his son and daughter to find out how they were keeping and to enquire after the well-being of all in the household. A deeply gentle man with a kind heart who loved Truth. We will miss him greatly, and are infinitely saddened. His memory will be cherished by all whose lives were touched by his life; his loved ones, Yogi, Gajendrakumar and Mrinalini; his family and friends near and far - and his wider family of humanity in far flung places of the globe who nurture values of human dignity, honesty and worth.

As the threats on his life increased, and the danger became more and more imminent, he knew his days may well be numbered. He said to Yogi just a few weeks ago that maybe he would not see the end of the year 2000. He did not want to endanger the lives of others, so he preferred to travel alone, to avoid putting others at risk. The Truth was his only shield. This commitment to the truth and to a human rights advocacy based on integrity, principled and courageous action was the core of Mr Ponnambalam's international human rights work.

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HOW CANADA WELCOMED HIM IN LIFE

Kumar Ponnambalam was given a rapturous welcome when he visited Canada in May 1999. He was there at the launch ceremony of the research book in Tamil entitled "Tharani Engum Thamil Vahzlarpom" written by SAMY APPATHURAI.

Pictures show Mr.Kumar Ponnambalam and other guests being welcomed with traditional Nathaswaram-Thavil musicians, Mr.Ponnambalam on the stage with several Canadian dignitaries, City Mayor of Toronto Mel Lastman, Minister of Education in the Ontario Provincial Parliament Dave Johnson, ~ Federal Government M.P. Jim Brown and lawyer Marlene Missingey. The picture at bottom shows Mr.Ponnambalam gifting a copy of the book to the City Mayor.

Remembering Kumar Ponnambalam

"I AM DEVASTATED", - *Robert Evans*, MEP

Speaking in London Robert Evans Member of the Europan Parliament said:

"I considered Kumar Ponnambalam a friend of mine. I had met him several times and visited him only a few months ago in his house in Colombo. I am devastated that he should have died in this way."

"Mr. Ponnambalam was never afraid to speak out and was always conscious of the safety of others. His personal courage was such that he knew he would always be a possible target but his concern was always for other people. This was especially so when I went to his home."

Kumar was also a realist, said Robert Evans.

"He knew from years of personal experience that the freedom struggle of the Tamil people could not rely solely on the democratic process. He was also prepared to point a finger of blame for atrocities at the Sri Lankan military and the Sri Lankan government."

"Above all he recognised, like me, that the only lasting solution to the war would come from discussion and dialogue between the two parties to the conflict with international mediation."

As a human rights' lawyer Kumar Ponnambalam spoke of the situation in Sri Lanka at forums around the world.

"I considered Kumar Ponnambalam as my friend "

"Only recently he was in Brussels meeting with MEPs. He drew attention to the amazing lack of coverage of the Sri Lankan civil war in the European and world press."

Robert Evans, also said,

"The contrast, between the lack of coverage of the situation in Sri Lanka and Chechnya is very stark. The war in Sri Lanka is different but equally violent. The Sri Lankan government suppresses the coverage and Kumar was exposing this and many other aspects of the Tamil case."

Robert Evans, in conclusion, stated,

"His loss is a devastating blow to the whole Tamil community. Our thoughts today must surely be with his family. The best lasting tribute to Kumar Ponnambalam will be if the struggle for peace in Sri Lanka continues in the wake of his tragic death.

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"ONE OF THE FINEST HUMAN BEINGS"

Columnist Suranimala in the *SUNDAY LEADER*, January 9, 2000.

"...In the midst of these developments came the murder of Kumar Ponnambalam, a much misunderstood man.

"Ponnambalam counted among his closest friends more Sinhalese than Tamils (Suranimala was thinking of Colombo only - Ed.HS) and whatever one thought of his hardline political views, he was one of the finest human beings.

"Kumar was a man you couldn't help but love once you got to know him and a truer friend, it is not easy to find. And if we are not able to separate politics and friendship there will never be hope for unity in this country. This columnist did not agree with Kumar's political line but salute him as a decent human being and a thorough gentleman.

"What is alarming in the murder of Ponnambalam is the hurriedly printed and circulated letter by a group styling itself the "National Front Against Tigers", claiming responsibility for the murder. .....

The National Front in all probability is a bogus front and could well be a cover for a terror organisation sanctioned to murder perceived political opponents...."

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Eelam Tamil could be a future Olympian!

Fifteen years old Kamalesh Tharmasuthan, the table tennis player from Australia, has won the Under - 18 Mens Singles Title at the Australian National Table Tennis Championships held in Queensland recently. Kamalesh who was in excellent form to beat several elite Australian and New Zealand players to win this national title, is on track to achieve Oly mpic selection in years to come. To his credit he won all his matches in straight sets and in the finals he beat the New South Wales no. 1 player 2 1 - 1 7 and 2 1 - 18 in a tense battle. Kamalesh is one of the youngest to win his title and currently ranked number one in Australia (in this age group).

A fortnight prior to the above championships Kamalesh won the Senior Boys Open Singles event at the Australian Schools Championships. Here too his good form helped him to win all his matches in straight sets.

In April this year he was selected to represent the Victorian Youth (under-20) team in the Australian Youth Championships held in Melbourne. Victorians won the Interstate Team Championships and Kamalesh was one of the leading players (with eight wins) in the team. He also won the Junior Singles title at the Victorian State Open Junior TT Championships held in July. In addition he had won a number of Victorian regional championships at various times during this year.

Kamalesh, a year 10 student at Haileybury College (Victoria), had been a member of the School's first team since he was twelve. As an outstanding player, he had played a vital role in Haileybury's last four APS (Associated Public schools) table tennis premierships. He is unbeaten in this competition since 1997 and was the winner of the "senior player of the year" trophy for three years in succession.

Kamalesh, who started playing when he was eight, trains for between 10 to 15 hours a week. He has also attended various coaching and talent identification camps conducted by Table Tennis Australia.

TRAG'S DUMB & DEAF YOUTH CLUB

Among projects undertaken by the Tamil Refugee Action Group (TRAG) is a Deaf & Dumb Youth Club. On the completion of one year of activity of the Club, TRAG held a celebration and party at the TRAG office in London. Picture shows TRAG Co-ordinator Mrs.S.Thiagamoorthy, Mr.Navanayagam, volunteers and some members of the Club.

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Obituaries

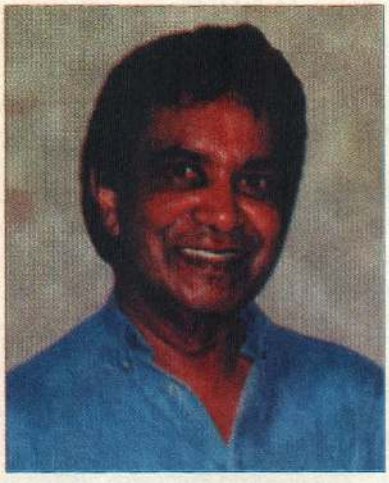
Samuel Selvarajah

Samuel Selvarajah, retired Manager, Bank of Ceylon, son of the late Mr and Mrs. S.Sabapathypillai of Chavakachcheri, husband of Lily Joseph, father of Chrisilda Anandajeya (USA), Reginald Selvendra (UK), Noel Shylendra (Canada), Darin Subendra (UK), and Cliff Nirendra (Sri Lanka) passed away on 20th January in Canada.

* * *

Ranjit Thangiah

A correspondent writes: Ranjit Thangiah of Croydon, London, passed away at home on the 11th December 1999 after a spell of illness bravely borne The funeral which took place on the 15th December at West Croydon Baptist Church was largely attended by a host of friends and relatives.



He was born on 5 June 1940 and was the youngest son of the late Mr. and Mrs.Thangiah of Kandy, Sri Lanka. He was educated at St.Thomas' College, Mt.Lavinia, where he excelled in Cricket, and Hockey and was also the Head Prefect.

He leaves behind his wife Vathany and his two children Rajani and Suthan.

* * *

Raviraj Sinnarasah

A Tamil Eelam activist in Washington D.C., U.S.A. and a long-time member of the World Tamil Coordinating Committee, in New York Mr.Raviraj Sinnarasa passed away on 6th January , to the great grief of his fellow associates in the Tamil cause, both in the U.S. and outside.

Raviraj was known for his simplicity in dress and behaviour and his deep love for the Tamil language. The opulence of the country in which he lived did not affect his way of living , nor did make him succumb to the alien values of the west. His totally unexpected passing away at the comparatively young age of 40, when he had many, many years of service ahead of him has robbed the Tamil cause of a valued asset. *S.S.*

Born: 31.3.1960 - Died: 06.01.2000

Guidelines for the performance of the last rites by Saivaite Hindus

This is the title of a unique book in English that sets out in minute detail the various guidelines to be followed in conducting the last rites of Saivaite Hindus. This comes with a twin publication called "Appendices to the Guidelines for the Performance of the Last Rites"in Tamil that gives all the "Thevarams" to be sung :1. Before the bathing ceremony; 2.After the bathing ceremony; and until the eve of the 31st day ceremony.

The main book for example has as its contents five parts: Ceremonies up to the time the body is cremated at the crematorium Ceremonies up to the "Ettam Padayal" , i.e. the 3rd day Prayer; Ceremonies up to the "Anthiyeshti Day ,i.e. the 31st Day; Items to be bought for the different ceremonies; and How to find the Date and Day for the "Thithi" for the deceased. These are followed by a Sketch of the "Kiriya Mandapam".

The book was researched by Messrs. Sivanesan Sivabalan, Mr.S.T. Kandasamy (Muar) and Canagaratnam Tharmalingam, all of Malaysia. The book is priced at Singapore Dollars 15/-Those wishing to _ purchase the book are requested to contact Mr.C.Tharmalingam at 43, Thrift Drive, Singapore 535047. (Tel: 284 4294)

To those Saivaite Hindus who value their culture and heritage, this publication is a must in every one of their homes. Saivaite temples and organisations would be better advised to order this publication in bulk and ensure it reaches their worshippers and members in their respective countries.

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Daughter, 26, Christian, fair, pretty, British citizen, qualified in business studies and employed in London with good salary. Owns property in London. Seeking a professional Tamil Christian wishing to settle in London. Please apply with details. *Ref: MPG 234 Hot Spring*

Engineer, 32, Jaffna Tamil, graduated (Computer & Control Engineering) in the UK and employed in London with good salary and permanent resident status in the UK, seeks a suitable educated Hindu Tamil girl. Not particularly keen on horoscope, but is available if required. *Ref: MPB 115 Hot Spring*

Daughter, 29, graduate, High School teacher in Canada, 5ft 6in tall, vegetarian, Jaffna Hindu, seeks professionally qualified partner. Please send horoscope and details. *Ref: MPG221 Hot Spring*

Ceylon Tamil Roman Catholic mother (father Sinhalese, deceased) now resident in Canada, Seeks partner for daughter, 28 years old, Canadian citizen and working for a prestigious bank. Catholic or Christian preferred. Please provide details in strict confidence. *Ref: MPG 232 Hot Spring*

Nephew 30, Nieice 28, Christians, both doctors, fair complexion, Sri Lankan born. European citizens, Western qualified. Seek suitable professionally qualified partners. Please forward details in confidence quoting the following: *Ref: MPC 101 Hot Spring*

Respondents are invited to write to THE MEETING POINT, PO Box 24360, London SW17 7FF, United Kingdom.

Tel: 0181 767 1230, Fax: 0181 672 6433

Please ensure that you quote the appropriate Ref.No. given at the end of the proposal in which you are interested.

Engineer, 42, divorced, 5 ft 4 in tall, in good management position in UK, Hindu, originally from Jaffna, now British, seeks Hindu lady aged about 35 single, divorced or widowed. Please send details. *Ref: MPB112 Hot Spring*

Daughter, 29, British citizen, came to the U.K. in 1984. gainfully employed near London. Numerology 1. Horoscope can be forwarded to interested parties. Please write giving particulars. *Ref: MPG 233 Hot Spring*

Daughter, 27, Roman Catholic, of Jaffna origin, graduate, qualified in the accountancy field, currently working in London, seeks suitable professionally qualified Roman catholic or Christian partner, aged between 28 to 35. Please forward details. *Ref: MPG227 Hot Spring*

Daughter, 28, Jaffna Hindu, 5ft 9in tall, vegetarian, Graduate, currently employed as a Software Engineer in the US, parents in Canada, seeks a suitable Jaffna Hindu professional. Please send details and horoscope. *Ref: MPG220 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu Son, 27, MSc, Management Consultant in computing in London, seeks suitable partner, Hindu with university education. Horoscope essential. Please forward details. *Ref: MPB107 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu son, 32, well qualified Software Engineer in good employment with immediate family members living in the UK. Partner to suit his horoscope with mars in the 7th house is sought by mother. Please write in confidence. *Ref: MPB116 Hot Spring*

Son, 30, Hindu, British born, Masters degree holder, currently working as an Academic research Assistant in a London teaching hospital seeks suitable partner. Please send horoscope and details in confidence. *Ref: MPB110 Hot Spring*

Jaffna Hindu daughter, 28, now British, vegetarian, graduate, with traditional cultural background including dancing, a Sai Baba devotee, seeks suitable partner. Please send horoscope and other details. Thank you. *Ref: MPG209 Hot Spring*

Niece, 30, Christian, educated throughout in Colombo, presently in London, doctor father practicing in Colombo, seeks suitable Christian professional preferably employed in the UK. Please forward details. *Ref: MPG228 Hot Spring*

The Meeting Point

Tel: 0181 767 1230 Fax: 0181 672 6433

The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora has in recent years spread to many different countries in the World - to the UK and other European Countries, to America, to Canada and Australia. As a result contacts between those who were previously friends and neighbours back in Sri Lanka have become almost non-existent. The hardships and pressures in trying to establish ourselves in the new country of residence have made matters even more difficult.

Many young men and women of marriageable age are therefore faced with difficulties in finding suitable partners in their own community.

The Meeting Point was inaugurated in London on 17th May 98, at a meeting attended by a large number of Tamil parents. The Meeting Point will operate as a voluntary organisation manned by a few respectable retired persons who are keen to serve the community by helping parents find suitable marriage partners for their sons/daughters. These volunteers understand the nature of this exercise and will ensure utmost care and discretion in divulging information of individuals.

The Meeting Point also organises events such as parties and forums where young people will have opportunities to meet and get to know each other in a leisurely atmosphere. Suggestions, help and contributions are most welcome.

Parents/guardians/friends, desiring to seek a partner for a girl/boy, are welcome to make an application to The Meeting Point. Applicants are also welcome to visit the office of The Meeting Point by prior appointment.

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